

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation



VAUTRIN

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

IN TWENTY-FIVE VOLUMES

The First Complete Translation into English

COUSIN PONS OLD GORIOT

CONTENTS

Volume Fifteen

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM DRAWINGS ON THE WOOD
BY FAMOUS FRENCH ARTISTS



New York
PETER FENELON COLLIER & SON

• M C M •

HONORE DE BALZAC
IN TWENTY-FIVE VOLUMES

The First Complete Translation into English

COUSIN PONS
OLD GORIOT

Volume Fifteen

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM DRAWINGS ON THE WOOD
BY FAMOUS FRENCH ARTISTS



Printed by

PETER FENELON COLLIER & SON

NEW YORK

Stack
Annex

PQ

2161

B27

1900

v. 15

CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	
Cousin Pons.....	
<i>Preface</i>	
Old Goriot.....	

PREFACE

ONE of the last and largest of Balzac's great works—the very last of them, if we except “La Cousine Bette,” to which it is pendant and contrast—“Le Cousin Pons” has always united suffrages from very different classes of admirers. In the first place, it is not “disagreeable,” as the common euphemism has it, and as “La Cousine Bette” certainly is. In the second, it cannot be accused of being a *berquinade*, as those who like Balzac best when he is doing moral rag-picking are apt to describe books like “Le Médecin de Campagne” and “Le Lys dans la Vallée,” if not even like “Eugénie Grandet.” It has a considerable variety of interest; its central figure is curiously pathetic and attractive, even though the curse of something like folly, which so often attends Balzac's good characters, may a little weigh on him. It would be a book of exceptional charm even if it were anonymous, or if we knew no more about the author than we know about Shakespeare.

As it happens, however, “Le Cousin Pons” has other attractions than this. In the first place, Balzac is always great—perhaps he is at his greatest—in depicting a mania, a passion, whether the subject be pleasure or gold-hunger or parental affection. Pons has two manias, and the one does not interfere with, but rather helps, the other. But this would be nothing if it were not that his chief mania, his ruling passion, is one of Balzac's own. For, as we have often had occasion to notice, Balzac is not by any means one of the great impersonal artists. He can do many things; but he is never at his best in doing any unless his own personal interests, his likings and hatreds, his sufferings and

enjoyments, are concerned. He was a kind of actor-manager in his "Comédie Humaine"; and perhaps, like other actor-managers, he took rather disproportionate care of the parts which he played himself.

Now, he was even more desperate as a collector and fancier of *bibelots* than he was as a speculator; and while the one mania was nearly as responsible for his pecuniary troubles and his need to overwork himself as the other, it certainly gave him more constant and more comparatively harmless satisfactions. His connoisseurship has, of course, been questioned—one connoisseur would be nothing if he did not question the competence of another, if not of all others. It seems certain that Balzac frequently bought things for what they were not; and probable that his own acquisitions went, in his own eyes, through that succession of stages which Charles Lamb (a sort of Cousin Pons in his way too) described inimitably. His pictures, like John Lamb's, were apt to begin as Rafaels and end as Carlo Marattis. Balzac, too, like Pons, was even more addicted to *bric-à-brac* than to art proper; and after many vicissitudes, he and Madame Hanska seem to have succeeded in getting together a very considerable, if also a very miscellaneous and unequal, collection in the house in the Rue du Paradis, the contents of which were dispersed in part (though, I believe, the Rothschild who bought it, bought most of them too) not many years ago. Pons, indeed, was too poor, and probably too queer, to indulge in one fancy which Balzac had, and which, I think, all collectors of the nobler and more poetic class have, though this number may not be large. Balzac liked to have new beautiful things as well as old—to have beautiful things made for him. He was an unwearied customer, though not an uncomplaining one, of the great jeweller Froment Meurice, whose tardiness in carrying out his behests he pathetically upbraids in more than one extant letter.

Therefore, Balzac "did more than sympathize, he felt"—as it has been well put—with Pons in the *bric-à-brac* matter; and it would appear that he did so likewise in that of music,

though we have rather less direct evidence. This other sympathy has resulted in the addition to Pons himself of the figure of Schmucke, a minor and more parochial figure, but good in itself, and very much appreciated, I believe, by fellow *mélomanes*.

It is with even more than his usual art that Balzac has surrounded these two originals—these “humorists,” as our own ancestors would have called them—with figures much, very much, more of the ordinary world than themselves. The grasping worldliness of the *parvenu* family of Camusot in one degree, and the greed of the portress, Madame Cibot, on the other, are admirably represented; the latter, in particular, must always hold a very high place among Balzac’s greatest successes. She is, indeed, a sort of companion sketch to Cousine Bette herself in a still lower rank of life, representing the diabolical in woman; and perhaps we should not wrong the author’s intentions if we suspected that Diane de Maufrigneuse has some claims to make up the trio in a sphere even more above Lisbeth’s than Lisbeth’s is above Madame Cibot’s own.

Different opinions have been held of the actual “*bric-à-bracery*” of this piece—that is to say, not of Balzac’s competence in the matter, but of the artistic value of his introduction of it. Perhaps his enthusiasm does a little run away with him; perhaps he gives us a little too much of it, and avails himself too freely of the license, at least of the temptation, to digress which the introduction of such persons as Élie Magus affords. And it is also open to any one to say that the climax, or what is in effect the climax, is introduced somewhat too soon; that the struggle, first over the body and then over the property of Patroclus-Pons, is inordinately spun out; and that, even granting the author’s mania, he might have utilized it better by giving us more of the harmless and ill-treated cousin’s happy hunts, and less of the disputes over his accumulated quarry. This, however, means simply the old, and generally rather impertinent, suggestion to the artist that he shall do with his art some-

thing different from that which he has himself chosen to do. It is, or should be, sufficient that "Le Cousin Pons" is a very agreeable book, more pathetic, if less "grimy," than its companion, full of its author's idiosyncrasy, and characteristic of his genius. It may not be uninteresting to add that "Le Cousin Pons" was originally called "Les Deux Musiciens," or "Le Parasite," and that the change, which is a great improvement, was due to the instances of Madame Hanska.

(For bibliography, see the Preface to "La Cousine Bette.")

G. S.

COUSIN PONS

TOWARD three o'clock in the afternoon of one October day in the year 1844, a man of sixty or thereabout, whom anybody might have credited with more than his actual age, was walking along the Boulevard des Italiens with his head bent down, as if he were tracking some one. There was a smug expression about the mouth—he looked like a merchant who has just done a good stroke of business, or a bachelor emerging from a boudoir in the best of humors with himself; and in Paris this is the highest degree of self-satisfaction ever registered by a human countenance.

As soon as the elderly person appeared in the distance, a smile broke out over the faces of the frequenters of the Boulevard, who daily, from their chairs, watch the passers-by, and indulge in the agreeable pastime of analyzing them. That smile is peculiar to Parisians; it says so many things—ironical, quizzical, pitying; but nothing save the rarest of human curiosities can summon that look of interest to the faces of Parisians, sated as they are with every possible sight.

A saying recorded of Hyacinthe, an actor celebrated for his repartees, will explain the archæological value of the old gentleman, and the smile repeated like an echo by all eyes. Somebody once asked Hyacinthe where the hats were made that set the house in a roar as soon as he appeared. "I don't have them made," he said; "I keep them!" So also among the million actors who make up the great troupe of Paris, there are unconscious Hyacinthes who "keep" all the absurd freaks of vanished fashions upon their backs; and the appari-

tion of some bygone decade will startle you into laughter as you walk the streets in bitterness of soul over the treason of one who was your friend in the past.

In some respects the passer-by adhered so faithfully to the fashions of the year 1806, that he was not so much a burlesque caricature as a reproduction of the Empire period. To an observer, accuracy of detail in a revival of this sort is extremely valuable, but accuracy of detail, to be properly appreciated, demands the critical attention of an expert *flâneur*; while the man in the street who raises a laugh as soon as he comes in sight is bound to be one of those outrageous exhibitions which stare you in the face, as the saying goes, and produce the kind of effect which an actor tries to secure for the success of his entry. The elderly person, a thin, spare man, wore a nut-brown spencer over a coat of uncertain green, with white metal buttons. A man in a spencer in the year eighteen hundred and forty-four! it was as if Napoleon himself had vouchsafed to come to life again for a couple of hours.

The spencer, as its name indicates, was the invention of an English lord, vain, doubtless, of his handsome shape. Some time before the Peace of Amiens, this nobleman solved the problem of covering the bust without destroying the outlines of the figure and incumbering the person with the hideous boxcoat, now finishing its career on the backs of aged hackney cabmen; but, elegant figures being in the minority, the success of the spencer was short-lived in France, English though it was.

At sight of the spencer, men of forty or fifty mentally invested the wearer with top-boots, pistachio-colored kersey-mere small-clothes adorned with a knot of ribbon; and beheld themselves in the costumes of their youth. Elderly ladies thought of former conquests; but the younger men were asking each other why the aged Alcibiades had cut off the skirts of his overcoat. The rest of the costume was so much in keeping with the spencer that you would not have hesitated to call the wearer "an Empire man," just as you call a cer-

tain kind of furniture "Empire furniture"; yet the newcomer only symbolized the Empire for those who had known that great and magnificent epoch at any rate *de visu*, for a certain accuracy of memory was needed for the full appreciation of the costume, and even now the Empire is so far away that not every one of us can picture it in its Gallo-Grecian reality.

The stranger's hat, for instance, tipped to the back of his head so as to leave almost the whole forehead bare, recalled a certain jaunty air, with which civilians and officials attempted to swagger it with military men; but the hat itself was a shocking specimen of the fifteen-franc variety. Constant friction with a pair of enormous ears had left marks which no brush could efface from the underside of the brim; the silk tissue (as usual) fitted badly over the cardboard foundation, and hung in wrinkles here and there; and some skin-disease (apparently) had attacked the nap in spite of the hand which rubbed it down of a morning.

Beneath the hat, which seemed ready to drop off at any moment, lay an expanse of countenance grotesque and droll, as the faces which the Chinese alone of all people can imagine for their quaint curiosities. The broad visage was as full of holes as a colander, honey-combed with the shadows of the dints, hollowed out like a Roman mask. It set all the laws of anatomy at defiance. Close inspection failed to detect the substructure. Where you expected to find a bone, you discovered a layer of cartilaginous tissue, and the hollows of an ordinary human face were here filled out with flabby bosses. A pair of gray eyes, red-rimmed and lashless, looked forlornly out of a countenance which was flattened something after the fashion of a pumpkin, and surmounted by a Don Quixote nose that rose out of it like a monolith above a plain. It was the kind of nose, as Cervantes must surely have explained somewhere, which denotes an inborn enthusiasm for all things great, a tendency which is apt to degenerate into credulity.

And yet, though the man's ugliness was something almost

ludicrous, it aroused not the slightest inclination to laugh. The exceeding melancholy which found an outlet in the poor man's faded eyes reached the mocker himself and froze the gibes on his lips; for all at once the thought arose that this was a human creature to whom Nature had forbidden any expression of love or tenderness, since such expression could only be painful or ridiculous to the woman he loved. In the presence of such misfortune a Frenchman is silent; to him it seems the most cruel of all afflictions—to be unable to please!

The man so ill-favored was dressed after the fashion of shabby gentility, a fashion which the rich not seldom try to copy. He wore low shoes beneath gaiters of the pattern worn by the Imperial Guard, doubtless for the sake of economy, because they kept the socks clean. The rusty tinge of his black breeches, like the cut and the white or shiny line of the creases, assigned the date of the purchase some three years back. The roomy garments failed to disguise the lean proportions of the wearer, due apparently rather to constitution than to a Pythagorean regimen, for the worthy man was endowed with thick lips and a sensual mouth; and when he smiled, displayed a set of white teeth which would have done credit to a shark.

A shawl-waistcoat, likewise of black cloth, was supplemented by a white under-waistcoat, and yet again beneath this gleamed the edge of a red knitted under-jacket, to put you in mind of Garat's five waistcoats. A huge white muslin stock with a conspicuous bow, invented by some exquisite to charm "the charming sex" in 1809, projected so far above its wearer's chin that the lower part of his face was lost, as it were, in a muslin abyss. A silk watch-guard, plaited to resemble the keepsakes made of hair, meandered down his shirt-front and secured his watch from improbable theft. The greenish coat, though older by some three years than the breeches, was remarkably neat; the black velvet collar and shining metal buttons, recently renewed, told of carefulness which descended even to trifles.

The particular manner of fixing the hat on the occiput, the triple waistcoat, the vast cravat engulfing the chin, the gaiters, the metal buttons on the greenish coat—all these reminiscences of Imperial fashions were blended with a sort of afterwaft and lingering perfume of the coquetry of the *Incroyable*—with an indescribable finical something in the folds of the garments, a certain air of stiffness and correctness in the demeanor that smacked of the school of David, that recalled Jacob's spindle-legged furniture.

At first sight, moreover, you set him down either for the gentleman by birth fallen a victim to some degrading habit, or for the man of small independent means whose expenses are calculated to such a nicety that the breakage of a window-pane, a rent in a coat, or a visit from the philanthropic pest who asks you for subscriptions to a charity, absorbs the whole of a month's little surplus of pocket-money. If you had seen him that afternoon, you would have wondered how that grotesque face came to be lighted up with a smile; usually, surely, it must have worn the dispirited, passive look of the obscure toiler condemned to labor without ceasing for the barest necessities of life. Yet when you noticed that the odd-looking old man was carrying some object (evidently precious) in his right hand with a mother's care, concealing it under the skirts of his coat to keep it from collisions in the crowd, and still more, when you remarked that important air always assumed by an idler when intrusted with a commission, you would have suspected him of recovering some piece of lost property, some modern equivalent of the marquise's poodle; you would have recognized the assiduous gallantry of the "man of the Empire" returning in triumph from his mission to some charming woman of sixty, reluctant as yet to dispense with the daily visit of her elderly *attentif*.

In Paris only among great cities will you see such spectacles as this; for of her boulevards Paris makes a stage where a never-ending drama is played gratuitously by the French nation in the interests of Art.

In spite of the rashly assumed spencer, you would scarcely have thought, after a glance at the contours of the man's bony frame, that this was an artist—that conventional type which is privileged, in something the same way as a Paris gamin, to represent riotous living to the bourgeois and philistine mind, the most *mirific* joviality, in short (to use the old Rabelaisian word newly taken into use). Yet, this elderly person had once taken the medal and the travelling scholarship; he had composed the first cantata crowned by the Institut at the time of the re-establishment of the Académie de Rome; he was M. Sylvain Pons, in fact—M. Sylvain Pons, whose name appears on the covers of well-known sentimental songs trilled by our mothers, to say nothing of a couple of operas, played in 1815 and 1816, and diverse unpublished scores. The worthy soul was now ending his days as the conductor of an orchestra in a boulevard theatre, and a music master in several young ladies' boarding-schools, a post for which his face particularly recommended him. He was entirely dependent upon his earnings. Running about to give private lessons at his age!—Think of it. How many a mystery lies in that unromantic situation!

But the last man to wear the spencer carried something else about him besides his Empire associations: a warning and a lesson was written large over that triple waistcoat. Wherever he went, he exhibited, without fee or charge, one of the many victims of the fatal system of competition which still prevails in France in spite of a century of trial without result; for Poisson de Marigny, brother of the Pompadour and Director of Fine Arts, somewhere about 1746 invented this method of applying pressure to the brain. That was a hundred years ago. Try if you can count upon your fingers the men of genius among the prizemen of those hundred years.

In the first place, no deliberate effort of schoolmaster or administrator can replace the miracles of chance which produce great men: of all the mysteries of generation, this most defies the ambitious modern scientific investigator. In the

second—the ancient Egyptians (we are told) invented incubator-stoves for hatching eggs; what would be thought of Egyptians who should neglect to fill the beaks of the callow fledglings? Yet this is precisely what France is doing. She does her utmost to produce artists by the artificial heat of competitive examination; but the sculptor, painter, engraver, or musician once turned out by this mechanical process, she no more troubles herself about them and their fate than the dandy cares for yesterday's flower in his buttonhole. And so it happens that the really great man is a Greuze, a Watteau, a Félicien David, a Pagnesi, a Géricault, a Decamps, an Auber, a David d'Angers, an Eugène Delacroix, or a Meissonier—artists who take but little heed of *grands prix*, and spring up in the open field under the rays of that invisible sun called Vocation.

To resume. The Government sent Sylvain Pons to Rome to make a great musician of himself; and in Rome Sylvain Pons acquired a taste for the antique and works of art. He became an admirable judge of those masterpieces of the brain and hand which are summed up by the useful neologism "bric-à-brac"; and when the child of Euterpe returned to Paris somewhere about the year 1810, it was in the character of a rabid collector, loaded with pictures, statuettes, frames, wood-carving, ivories, enamels, porcelains, and the like. He had sunk the greater part of his patrimony, not so much in the purchases themselves as on the expenses of transit; and every penny inherited from his mother had been spent in the course of a three years' travel in Italy after the residence in Rome came to an end. He had seen Venice, Milan, Florence, Bologna, and Naples leisurely, as he wished to see them, as a dreamer of dreams, and a philosopher; careless of the future, for an artist looks to his talent for support as the *fille de joie* counts upon her beauty.

All through those splendid years of travel Pons was as happy as was possible to a man with a great soul, a sensitive nature, and a face so ugly that any "success with the fair" (to use the stereotyped formula of 1809) was out of the ques-

tion; the realities of life always fell short of the ideals which Pons created for himself; the world without was not in tune with the soul within, but Pons had made up his mind to the dissonance. Doubtless the sense of beauty that he had kept pure and living in his inmost soul was the spring from which the delicate, graceful, and ingenious music flowed and won him reputation between 1810 and 1814.

Every reputation founded upon the fashion or the fancy of the hour, or upon the short-lived follies of Paris, produces its Pons. No place in the world is so inexorable in great things; no city of the globe so disdainfully indulgent in small. Pons's notes were drowned before long in floods of German harmony and the music of Rossini; and if in 1824 he was known as an agreeable musician, a composer of various drawing-room melodies, judge if he was likely to be famous in 1831! In 1844, the year in which the single drama of his obscure life began, Sylvain Pons was of no more value than an antediluvian semiquaver; dealers in music had never heard of his name, though he was still composing, on scanty pay, for his own orchestra or for neighboring theatres.

And yet, the worthy man did justice to the great masters of our day; a masterpiece finely rendered brought tears to his eyes; but his religion never bordered on mania, as in the case of Hoffmann's Kreislers; he kept his enthusiasm to himself; his delight, like the paradise reached by opium or hashish, lay within his own soul.

The gift of admiration, of comprehension, the single faculty by which the ordinary man becomes the brother of the poet, is rare in this city of Paris, that inn whither all ideas, like travellers, come to stay for a while; so rare is it that Pons surely deserves our respectful esteem. His personal failure may seem anomalous, but he frankly admitted that he was weak in harmony. He had neglected the study of counterpoint; there was a time when he might have begun his studies afresh and held his own among modern composers, when he might have been, not certainly a Rossini, but a Hérold. But he was alarmed by the intricacies of modern

orchestration; and at length, in the pleasures of collecting, he found such ever-renewed compensation for his failure that, if he had been made to choose between his curiosities and the fame of Rossini—will it be believed?—Pons would have pronounced for his beloved collection.

Pons was of the opinion of Chenavard, the print-collector, who laid it down as an axiom—that you only fully enjoy the pleasure of looking at your Ruysdael, Hobbema, Holbein, Rafael, Murillo, Greuze, Sebastian del Piombo, Giorgione, Albrecht Dürer, or what not, when you have paid less than sixty francs for your picture. Pons never gave more than a hundred francs for any purchase. If he laid out as much as fifty francs, he was careful to assure himself beforehand that the object was worth three thousand. The most beautiful thing in the world, if it cost three hundred francs, did not exist for Pons. Rare had been his bargains; but he possessed the three qualifications for success—a stag's legs, an idler's disregard of time, and the patience of a Jew.

This system, carried out for forty years, in Rome or Paris alike, had borne its fruits. Since Pons returned from Italy, he had regularly spent about two thousand francs a year upon a collection of masterpieces of every sort and description, a collection hidden away from all eyes but his own; and now his catalogue had reached the incredible number 1907. Wandering about Paris between 1811 and 1816, he had picked up many a treasure for ten francs, which would fetch a thousand or twelve hundred to-day. Some forty-five thousand canvases change hands annually in Paris picture sales, and these Pons had sifted through year by year. Pons had Sèvres porcelain, *pâte tendre*, bought of Auvergnats, those satellites of the Black Band who sacked châteaux and carried off the marvels of Pompadour France in their tumbril carts; he had, in fact, collected the drifted wreck of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; he recognized the genius of the French school, and discerned the merit of the Lepautres and Lavallée-Poussins and the rest of the great obscure creators of the Genre Louis Quinze and the Genre

Louis Seize. Our modern craftsmen now draw without acknowledgment from them, pore incessantly over the treasures of the Cabinet des Estampes, borrow adroitly, and give out their *pastiches* for new inventions. Pons had obtained many a piece by exchange, and therein lies the ineffable joy of the collector. The joy of buying bric-à-brac is a secondary delight; in the give-and-take of barter lies the joy of joys. Pons had begun by collecting snuff-boxes and miniatures; his name was unknown in bric-à-bracology, for he seldom showed himself in sale-rooms or in the shops of well-known dealers; Pons was not aware that his treasures had any commercial value.

The late lamented Dusommerard tried his best to gain Pons's confidence, but the prince of bric-à-brac died before he could gain an entrance to the Pons museum, the one private collection which could compare with the famous Sauvageot museum. Pons and M. Sauvageot indeed resembled each other in more ways than one. M. Sauvageot, like Pons, was a musician; he was likewise a comparatively poor man, and he had collected his bric-à-brac in much the same way, with the same love of art, the same hatred of rich capitalists with well-known names who collect for the sake of running up prices as cleverly as possible. There was yet another point of resemblance between the pair: Pons, like his rival competitor and antagonist, felt in his heart an insatiable craving after specimens of the craftsman's skill and miracles of workmanship; he loved them as a man might love a fair mistress; an auction in the sale-rooms in the Rue des Jeûneurs, with its accompaniments of hammer strokes and brokers' men, was a crime of *lèse-bric-à-brac* in Pons's eyes. Pons's museum was for his own delight at every hour; for the soul created to know and feel all the beauty of a masterpiece has this in common with the lover—to-day's joy is as great as the joy of yesterday; possession never palls; and a masterpiece, happily, never grows old. So the object that he held in his hand with such fatherly care could only be a "find," carried off with what affection amateurs alone know!

After the first outlines of this biographical sketch, every one will cry at once, "Why! this is the happiest man on earth, in spite of his ugliness!" And, in truth, no spleen, no dulness can resist the counter-irritant supplied by a "craze," the intellectual moxa of a hobby. You who can no longer drink of "the cup of pleasure," as it has been called through all ages, try to collect something, no matter what (people have been known to collect placards), so shall you receive the small change for the gold ingot of happiness. Have you a hobby? You have transferred pleasure to the plane of ideas. And yet, you need not envy the worthy Pons; such envy, like all kindred sentiments, would be founded upon a misapprehension.

With a nature so sensitive, with a soul that lived by tireless admiration of the magnificent achievements of art, of the high rivalry between human toil and the work of Nature—Pons was a slave to that one of the Seven Deadly Sins with which God surely will deal least hardly; Pons was a glutton. A narrow income, combined with a passion for bric-à-brac, condemned him to a regimen so abhorrent to a discriminating palate, that, bachelor as he was, he had cut the knot of the problem by dining out every day.

Now, in the time of the Empire, celebrities were more sought after than at present, perhaps because there were so few of them, perhaps because they made little or no political pretension. In those days, besides, you could set up for a poet, a musician, or a painter, with so little expense. Pons, being regarded as the probable rival of Nicolo, Paër, and Berton, used to receive so many invitations that he was forced to keep a list of engagements, much as barristers note down the cases for which they are retained. And Pons behaved like an artist. He presented his amphitryons with copies of his songs, he "obliged" at the pianoforte, he brought them orders for boxes at the Feydeau, his own theatre, he organized concerts, he was not above taking the fiddle himself sometimes in a relation's house, and getting up a little impromptu dance. In those days, all the hand-

some men in France were away at the wars exchanging sabre-cuts with the handsome men of the Coalition. Pons was said to be, not ugly, but "peculiar-looking," after the grand rule laid down by Molière in *Éliante's* famous couplets; but if he sometimes heard himself described as a "charming man" (after he had done some fair lady a service), his good fortune went no further than words.

It was between the years 1810 and 1816 that Pons contracted the unlucky habit of dining out; he grew accustomed to see his hosts taking pains over the dinner, procuring the first and best of everything, bringing out their choicest vintages, seeing carefully to the dessert, the coffee, and liqueurs, giving him of their best, in short; the best, moreover, of those times of the Empire when Paris was gluttoned with kings and queens and princes, and many a private house emulated royal splendors.

People used to play at Royalty then as they play nowadays at parliament, creating a whole host of societies with presidents, vice-presidents, secretaries and what not—agricultural societies, industrial societies, societies for the promotion of sericulture, viticulture, the growth of flax, and so forth. Some have even gone so far as to look about them for social evils in order to start a society to cure them.

But to return to Pons. A stomach thus educated is sure to react upon the owner's moral fibre; the demoralization of the man varies directly with his progress in culinary sapience. Voluptuousness, lurking in every secret recess of the heart, lays down the law therein. Honor and resolution are battered in breach. The tyranny of the palate has never been described; as a necessity of life it escapes the criticism of literature; yet no one imagines how many have been ruined by the table. The luxury of the table is indeed, in this sense, the courtesan's one competitor in Paris, besides representing in a manner the credit side in another account, where she figures as the expenditure.

With Pons's decline and fall as an artist came his simultaneous transformation from invited guest to parasite and

hanger-on; he could not bring himself to quit dinners so excellently served for the Spartan broth of a two-franc ordinary. Alas! alas! a shudder ran through him at the mere thought of the great sacrifices which independence required him to make. He felt that he was capable of sinking to even lower depths for the sake of good living, if there was no other way of enjoying the first and best of everything, of guzzling (vulgar but expressive word) nice little dishes carefully prepared. Pons lived like a bird, pilfering his meal, flying away when he had taken his fill, singing a few notes by way of return; he took a certain pleasure in the thought that he lived at the expense of society, which asked of him—what but the trifling toll of grimaces? Like all confirmed bachelors, who hold their lodgings in horror, and live as much as possible in other people's houses, Pons was accustomed to the formulas and facial contortions which do duty for feeling in the world; he used compliments as small change; and as far as others were concerned, he was satisfied with the labels they bore, and never plunged a too curious hand into the sack.

This not intolerable phase lasted for another ten years. Such years! Pons's life was closing with a rainy autumn. All through those years he contrived to dine without expense by making himself necessary in the houses which he frequented. He took the first step in the downward path by undertaking a host of small commissions; many and many a time Pons ran on errands instead of the porter or the servant; many a purchase he made for his entertainers. He became a kind of harmless, well-meaning spy, sent by one family into another; but he gained no credit with those for whom he trudged about, and so often sacrificed self-respect.

"Pons is a bachelor," said they; "he is at a loss to know what to do with his time; he is only too glad to trot about for us.—What else would he do?"

Very soon the cold which old age spreads about itself began to set in; the communicable cold which sensibly lowers the social temperature, especially if the old man is ugly

and poor. Old and ugly and poor—is not this to be thrice old? Pons's winter had begun, the winter which brings the reddened nose, and frost-nipped cheeks, and the numbed fingers, numb in how many ways!

Invitations very seldom came for Pons now. So far from seeking the society of the parasite, every family accepted him much as they accepted the taxes; they valued nothing that Pons could do for them; real services from Pons counted for naught. The family circles in which the worthy artist revolved had no respect for art or letters; they went down on their knees to practical results; they valued nothing but the fortune or social position acquired since the year 1830. The bourgeoisie is afraid of intellect and genius, but Pons's spirit and manner were not haughty enough to overawe his relations, and naturally he had come at last to be accounted less than nothing with them, though he was not altogether despised.

He had suffered acutely among them, but, like all timid creatures, he kept silence as to his pain; and so by degrees schooled himself to hide his feelings, and learned to take sanctuary in his inmost self. Many superficial persons interpret this conduct by the short word "selfishness"; and, indeed, the resemblance between the egoist and the solitary human creature is strong enough to seem to justify the harsher verdict; and this is especially true in Paris, where nobody observes others closely, where all things pass swift as waves, and last as little as a Ministry.

So Cousin Pons was accused of selfishness (behind his back); and if the world accuses any one, it usually finds him guilty and condemns him into the bargain. Pons bowed to the decision. Do any of us know how such a timid nature is cast down by an unjust judgment? Who will ever paint all that the timid suffer? This state of things, now growing daily worse, explains the sad expression on the poor old musician's face; he lived by capitulations of which he was ashamed. Every time we sin against self-respect at the bidding of the ruling passion, we rivet its hold upon us; the

more that passion requires of us, the stronger it grows, every sacrifice increasing, as it were, the value of a satisfaction for which so much has been given up, till the negative sum-total of renuncements looms very large in a man's imagination. Pons, for instance, after enduring the insolently patronizing looks of some bourgeois, incased in buckram of stupidity, sipped his glass of port or finished his quail with bread-crumbs, and relished something of the savor of revenge besides. "It is not too dear at the price!" he said to himself.

After all, in the eyes of the moralist, there were extenuating circumstances in Pons's case. Man only lives, in fact, by some personal satisfaction. The passionless, perfectly righteous man is not human; he is a monster, an angel wanting wings. The angel of Christian mythology has nothing but a head. On earth, the righteous person is the sufficiently tiresome Grandison, for whom the very Venus of the Cross-roads is sexless.

Setting aside one or two commonplace adventures in Italy, in which probably the climate accounted for his success, no woman had ever smiled upon Pons. Plenty of men are doomed to this fate. Pons was an abnormal birth; the child of parents well stricken in years, he bore the stigma of his untimely genesis; his cadaverous complexion might have been contracted in the flask of spirit-of-wine in which science preserves some extraordinary foetus. Artist though he was, with his tender, dreamy, sensitive soul, he was forced to accept the character which belonged to his face; it was hopeless to think of love, and he remained a bachelor, not so much of choice as of necessity. Then Gluttony, the sin of the continent monk, beckoned to Pons; he rushed upon temptation, as he had thrown his whole soul into the adoration of art and the cult of music. Good cheer and bric-à-brac gave him the small change for the love which could spend itself in no other way. As for music, it was his profession, and where will you find the man who is in love with his means of earning a livelihood? For it is with a profession as with

marriage: in the long length you are sensible of nothing but the drawbacks.

Brillat-Savarin has deliberately set himself to justify the gastronome, but perhaps even he has not dwelt sufficiently on the reality of the pleasures of the table. The demands of digestion upon the human economy produce an internal wrestling-bout of human forces which rivals the highest degree of amorous pleasure. The gastronome is conscious of an expenditure of vital power, an expenditure so vast that the brain is atrophied (as it were), that a second brain, located in the diaphragm, may come into play, and the suspension of all the faculties is in itself a kind of intoxication. A boaconstrictor gorged with an ox is so stupid with excess that the creature is easily killed. What man, on the wrong side of forty, is rash enough to work after dinner? And remark in the same connection, that all great men have been moderate eaters. The exhilarating effect of the wing of a chicken upon invalids recovering from serious illness, and long confined to a stinted and carefully chosen diet, has been frequently remarked. The sober Pons, whose whole enjoyment was concentrated in the exercise of his digestive organs, was in the position of chronic convalescence; he looked to his dinner to give him the utmost degree of pleasurable sensation, and hitherto he had procured such sensations daily. Who dares to bid farewell to old habit? Many a man on the brink of suicide has been plucked back on the threshold of death by the thought of the café where he plays his nightly game of dominoes.

In the year 1835, chance avenged Pons for the indifference of womankind by finding him a prop for his declining years, as the saying goes; and he, who had been old from his cradle, found a support in friendship. Pons took to himself the only life-partner permitted to him among his kind—an old man and a fellow musician.

But for La Fontaine's fable, "*Les Deux Amis*," this sketch should have borne the title of "*The Two Friends*"; but to take the name of his divine story would surely be a deed of

violence, a profanation from which every true man of letters would shrink. The title ought to be borne alone and forever by the fabulist's masterpiece, the revelation of his soul, and the record of his dreams; those three words were set once and forever by the poet at the head of a page which is his by a sacred right of ownership; for it is a shrine before which all generations, all over the world, will kneel so long as the art of printing shall endure.

Pons's friend gave lessons on the pianoforte. They met and struck up an acquaintance in 1834 one prize day at a boarding-school; and so congenial were their ways of thinking and living that Pons used to say that he had found his friend too late for his happiness. Never, perhaps, did two souls, so much alike, find each other in the great ocean of humanity which flowed forth, in disobedience to the will of God, from its source in the Garden of Eden. Before very long the two musicians could not live without each other. Confidences were exchanged, and in a week's time they were like brothers. Schmucke (for that was his name) had not believed that such a man as Pons existed, nor had Pons imagined that a Schmucke was possible. Here already you have a sufficient description of the good couple; but it is not every mind that takes kindly to the concise synthetic method, and a certain amount of demonstration is necessary if the credulous are to accept the conclusion.

This pianist, like all other pianists, was a German. A German, like the eminent Liszt and the great Mendelssohn, and Steibelt, and Dussek, and Meyer, and Mozart, and Doelher, and Thalberg, and Dreschok, and Hiller, and Leopold Mayer, and Cramer, and Zimmerman, and Kalkbrenner, and Hertz, Woërtz, Karr, Wolff, Pixis, and Clara Wieck—and all Germans, generally speaking. Schmucke was a great musical composer doomed to remain a music master, so utterly did his character lack the audacity which a musical genius needs if he is to push his way to the front. A German's naïveté does not invariably last him through his life; in some cases it fails after a certain age; and even as a culti-

vator of the soil brings water from afar by means of irrigation channels, so, from the springs of his youth, does the Teuton draw the simplicity which disarms suspicion—the perennial supplies with which he fertilizes his labors in every field of science, art, or commerce. A crafty Frenchman here and there will turn a Parisian tradesman's stupidity to good account in the same way. But Schmucke had kept his child's simplicity much as Pons continued to wear his relics of the Empire—all unsuspectingly. The true and noble-hearted German was at once the theatre and the audience, making music within himself for himself alone. In this city of Paris he lived as a nightingale lives among the thickets; and for twenty years he sang on, mateless, till he met with a second self in Pons.¹

Both Pons and Schmucke were abundantly given, both by heart and disposition, to the peculiarly German sentimentality which shows itself in childlike ways—in a passion for flowers, in that form of nature-worship which prompts a German to plant his garden beds with big glass globes for the sake of seeing miniature pictures of a view which he can behold about him of a natural size; in the inquiring turn of mind that sets a learned Teuton trudging three hundred miles in his gaiters in search of a fact which smiles up in his face from a wayside spring, or lurks laughing under the jessamine leaves in the backyard; or (to take a final instance) in the German craving to endow every least detail in creation with a spiritual significance, a craving which produces sometimes the inexplicable work of a Jean Paul Richter, sometimes Hoffmann's tipsiness in type, sometimes the folios with which Germany hedges the simplest questions round about, lest haply any fool should fall into her intellectual excavations; and, indeed, if you fathom these abysses, you find nothing but a German at the bottom.

Both friends were Catholics. They went to Mass and performed the duties of religion together; and, like chil-

¹ See "Une Fille d'Ève."

dren, found nothing to tell their confessors. It was their firm belief that music is to feeling and thought as thought and feeling are to speech; and of their converse on this system there was no end. Each made response to the other in orgies of sound, demonstrating their convictions, each for each, like lovers.

Schmucke was as absent-minded as Pons was wide awake. Pons was a collector, Schmucke a dreamer of dreams; Schmucke was a student of beauty seen by the soul, Pons a preserver of material beauty. Pons would catch sight of a china cup and buy it in the time that Schmucke took to blow his nose, wondering the while within himself whether the musical phrase that was ringing in his brain—the *motif* from Rossini or Bellini or Beethoven or Mozart—had its origin or its counterpart in the world of human thought and emotion. Schmucke's economies were controlled by an absent mind, Pons was a spendthrift through passion, and for both the result was the same—they had not a penny on Saint Sylvester's day.

Perhaps Pons would have given way under his troubles if it had not been for this friendship; but life became bearable when he found some one to whom he could pour out his heart. The first time that he breathed a word of his difficulties, the good German had advised him to live as he himself did, and eat bread and cheese at home sooner than dine abroad at such a cost. Alas! Pons did not dare to confess that heart and stomach were at war within him, that he could digest affronts which pained his heart, and, cost what it might, a good dinner that satisfied his palate was a necessity to him, even as your gay Lothario must have a mistress to tease.

In time Schmucke understood; not just at once, for he was too much of a Teuton to possess that gift of swift perception in which the French rejoice; Schmucke understood and loved poor Pons the better. Nothing so fortifies a friendship as a belief on the part of one friend that he is superior to the other. An angel could not have found a

word to say to Schmucke rubbing his hands over the discovery of the hold that gluttony had gained over Pons. Indeed, the good German adorned their breakfast-table next morning with delicacies of which he went in search himself; and every day he was careful to provide something new for his friend, for they always breakfasted together at home.

If any one imagines that the pair could escape ridicule in Paris, where nothing is respected, he cannot know that city. When Schmucke and Pons united their riches and poverty, they hit upon the economical expedient of lodging together, each paying half the rent of the very unequally divided second-floor of a house in the Rue de Normandie in the Marais. And as it often happened that they left home together and walked side by side along their beat of boulevard, the idlers of the quarter dubbed them "the pair of nutcrackers," a nickname which makes any portrait of Schmucke quite superfluous, for he was to Pons as the famous statue of the Nurse of Niobe in the Vatican is to the Tribune Venus.

Mme. Cibot, portress of the house in the Rue de Normandie, was the pivot on which the domestic life of the nutcrackers turned; but Mme. Cibot plays so large a part in the drama which grew out of their double existence that it will be more appropriate to give her portrait on her first appearance in this Scene of Parisian Life.

One thing remains to be said of the characters of the pair of friends; but this one thing is precisely the hardest to make clear to ninety-nine readers out of a hundred in this forty-seventh year of the nineteenth century, perhaps by reason of the prodigious financial development brought about by the railway system. It is a little thing, and yet it is much. It is a question, in fact, of giving an idea of the extreme sensitiveness of their natures. Let us borrow an illustration from the railways, if only by way of retaliation, as it were, for the loans which they levy upon us. The railway train of to-day, tearing over the metals, grinds away fine particles of dust, grains so minute that a traveller cannot detect them with the eye; but let a single one of those invisible motes

find its way into the kidneys, it will bring about that most excruciating, and sometimes fatal, disease known as gravel. And our society, rushing like a locomotive along its metalled track, is heedless of the all but imperceptible dust made by the grinding of the wheels; but it was otherwise with the two musicians: the invisible grains of sand sank perpetually into the very fibres of their being, causing them intolerable anguish of heart. Tender exceedingly to the pain of others, they wept for their own powerlessness to help; and their own susceptibilities were almost morbidly acute. Neither age nor the continual spectacle of the drama of Paris life had hardened two souls still young and childlike and pure; the longer they lived indeed, the more keenly they felt their inward suffering; for so it is, alas! with natures unsullied by the world, with the quiet thinker, and with such poets among poets as have never fallen into any excess.

Since the old men began housekeeping together, the day's routine was very nearly the same for them both. They worked together in harness in the fraternal fashion of the Paris cab-horse; rising every morning, summer and winter, at seven o'clock, and setting out after breakfast to give music lessons in the boarding-schools, in which, upon occasion, they would take lessons for each other. Toward noon Pons repaired to his theatre, if there was a rehearsal on hand; but all his spare moments were spent in sauntering on the boulevards. Night found both of them in the orchestra, for Pons had found a place for Schmucke, and upon this wise.

At the time of their first meeting, Pons had just received that marshal's baton of the unknown musical composer—an appointment as conductor of an orchestra. It had come to him unasked, by favor of Count Popinot, a bourgeois hero of July, at that time a member of the Government. Count Popinot had the license of a theatre in his gift, and Count Popinot had also an old acquaintance of the kind that the successful man blushes to meet. As he rolls through the streets of Paris in his carriage, it is not pleasant to see his boyhood's chum down at heel, with a coat of many improb-

able colors and trousers innocent of straps, and a head full of soaring speculations on too grand a scale to tempt shy, easily scared capital. Moreover, this friend of his youth, Gaudissart by name, had done not a little in the past toward founding the fortunes of the great house of Popinot. Popinot, now a Count and a peer of France, after twice holding a portfolio, had no wish to shake off "the Illustrious Gaudissart." Quite otherwise. The pomps and vanities of the Court of the Citizen-King had not spoiled the sometime druggist's kind heart: he wished to put his ex-commercial traveller in the way of renewing his wardrobe and replenishing his purse. So when Gaudissart, always an enthusiastic admirer of the fair sex, applied for the license of a bankrupt theatre, Popinot granted it on condition that Pons (a parasite of the Hotel Popinot) should be engaged as conductor of the orchestra; and at the same time, the Count was careful to send certain elderly amateurs of beauty to the theatre, so that the new manager might be strongly supported financially by wealthy admirers of feminine charms revealed by the costume of the ballet.

Gaudissart and Company, who, be it said, made their fortune, hit upon the grand idea of operas for the people, and carried it out in a boulevard theatre in 1834. A tolerable conductor, who could adapt or even compose a little music upon occasion, was a necessity for ballets and pantomimes; but the last management had so long been bankrupt that they could not afford to keep a transposer and copyist. Pons therefore introduced Schmucke to the company as copier of music, a humble calling which requires no small musical knowledge; and Schmucke, acting on Pons's advice, came to an understanding with the *chef-de-service* at the Opera-Comique, so saving himself the clerical drudgery.

The partnership between Pons and Schmucke produced one brilliant result. Schmucke being a German, harmony was his strong point; he looked over the instrumentation of Pons's compositions, and Pons provided the airs. Here and there an amateur among the audience admired the new pieces

of music which served as accompaniment to two or three great successes, but they attributed the improvement vaguely to "progress." No one cared to know the composer's name; like occupants of the *baignoires*, lost to view of the house, to gain a view of the stage, Pons and Schmucke eclipsed themselves by their success. In Paris (especially since the Revolution of July) no one can hope to succeed unless he will push his way *quibuscumque viis* and with all his might through a formidable host of competitors; but for this feat a man needs thews and sinews, and our two friends, be it remembered, had that affection of the heart which cripples all ambitious effort.

Pons, as a rule, only went to his theatre toward eight o'clock, when the piece in favor came on, and overtures and accompaniments needed the strict ruling of the baton; most minor theatres are lax in such matters, and Pons felt the more at ease because he himself had been by no means grasping in all his dealings with the management; and Schmucke, if need be, could take his place. Time went by, and Schmucke became an institution in the orchestra; the Illustrious Gaudissart said nothing, but he was well aware of the value of Pons's collaborator. He was obliged to include a pianoforte in the orchestra (following the example of the leading theatres); the instrument was placed beside the conductor's chair, and Schmucke played without increase of salary—a volunteer supernumerary. As Schmucke's character, his utter lack of ambition or pretence, became known, the orchestra recognized him as one of themselves; and as time went on, he was intrusted with the often needed miscellaneous musical instruments which form no part of the regular band of a boulevard theatre. For a very small addition to his stipend, Schmucke played the viola d'amore, hautboy, violoncello, and harp, as well as the piano, the castanets for the *cachucha*, the bells, saxhorn, and the like. If the Germans cannot draw harmony from the mighty instruments of Liberty, yet to play all instruments of music comes to them by nature.

The two old artists were exceedingly popular at the theatre, and took its ways philosophically. They had put, as it were, scales over their eyes, lest they should see the offences that needs must come when a *corps de ballet* is blended with actors and actresses, one of the most trying combinations ever created by the laws of supply and demand for the torment of managers, authors, and composers alike.

Every one esteemed Pons with his kindness and his modesty, his great self-respect and respect for others; for a pure and limpid life wins something like admiration from the worst nature in every social sphere, and in Paris a fair virtue meets with something of the success of a large diamond, so great a rarity it is. No actor, no dancer however brazen, would have indulged in the mildest practical joke at the expense of either Pons or Schmucke.

Pons very occasionally put in an appearance in the *foyer*; but all that Schmucke knew of the theatre was the underground passage from the street door to the orchestra. Sometimes, however, during an interval, the good German would venture to make a survey of the house and ask a few questions of the first flute, a young fellow from Strasburg, who came of a German family at Kehl. Gradually under the flute's tuition Schmucke's childlike imagination acquired a certain amount of knowledge of the world; he could believe in the existence of that fabulous creature the *lorette*, the possibility of "marriages at the Thirteenth Arrondissement," the vagaries of the leading lady, and the contraband traffic carried on by box-openers. In his eyes the more harmless forms of vice were the lowest depths of Babylonish iniquity; he did not believe the stories, he smiled at them for grotesque inventions. The ingenious reader can see that Pons and Schmucke were exploited, to use a word much in fashion; but what they lost in money they gained in consideration and kindly treatment.

It was after the success of the ballet with which a run of success began for the Gaudissart Company that the management presented Pons with a piece of plate—a group of

figures attributed to Benvenuto Cellini. The alarming costliness of the gift caused talk in the greenroom. It was a matter of twelve hundred francs! Pons, poor honest soul, was for returning the present, and Gaudissart had a world of trouble to persuade him to keep it.

"Ah!" said the manager afterward, when he told his partner of the interview, "if we could only find actors up to that sample."

In their joint life, outwardly so quiet, there was the one disturbing element—the weakness to which Pons sacrificed the insatiable craving to dine out. Whenever Schmucke happened to be at home while Pons was dressing for the evening, the good German would bewail this deplorable habit.

"Gif only he vas only fatter vor it!" he many a time cried.

And Schmucke would dream of curing his friend of his degrading vice, for a true friend's instinct in all that belongs to the inner life is unerring as a dog's sense of smell; a friend knows by intuition the trouble in his friend's soul, and guesses at the cause and ponders it in his heart.

Pons, who always wore a diamond ring on the little finger of his right hand, an ornament permitted in the time of the Empire, but ridiculous to-day—Pons, who belonged to the "troubadour time," the sentimental period of the First Empire, was too much a child of his age, too much of a Frenchman to wear the expression of divine serenity which softened Schmucke's hideous ugliness. From Pons's melancholy looks, Schmucke knew that the profession of parasite was growing daily more difficult and painful. And, in fact, in that month of October, 1844, the number of houses at which Pons dined was naturally much restricted; reduced to move round and round the family circle, he had used the word family in far too wide a sense, as will shortly be seen.

M. Camusot, the rich silk mercer of the Rue des Bourdonnais, had married Pons's first cousin, Mlle. Pons, only child and heiress of one of the well-known firm of Pons Brothers,

court embroiderers. Pons's own father and mother retired from a firm founded before the Revolution of 1789, leaving their capital in the business until Mlle. Pons's father sold it in 1815 to a M. Rivet. M. Camusot had since lost his wife and married again, and retired from business some ten years, and now in 1844 he was a member of the Board of Trade, a deputy, and what not. But the Camusot clan were friendly; and Pons, good man, still considered that he was some kind of cousin to the children of the second marriage, who were not relations, or even connected with him in any way.

The second Mme. Camusot being a Mlle. Cardot, Pons introduced himself as a relative into the tolerably numerous Cardot family, a second bourgeois tribe which, taken with its connections, formed quite as strong a clan as the Camusots; for Cardot the notary (brother of the second Mme. Camusot) had married a Mlle. Chiffreville; and the well-known family of Chiffreville, the leading firm of manufacturing chemists, was closely connected with the wholesale drug trade, of which M. Anselme Popinot was for many years the undisputed head, until the Revolution of July plunged him into the very centre of the dynastic movement, as everybody knows. So Pons, in the wake of the Camusots and Cardots, reached the Chiffrevilles, and thence the Popinots, always in the character of a cousin's cousin.

The above concise statement of Pons's relations with his entertainers explains how it came to pass that an old musician was received in 1844 as one of the family in the houses of four distinguished persons—to wit, M. le Comte Popinot, peer of France, and twice in office; M. Cardot, retired notary, mayor and deputy of an arrondissement in Paris; M. Camusot senior, a member of the Board of Trade and the Municipal Council of Paris, and a deputy on the highway to the Upper Chamber and a peerage; and lastly, M. Camusot de Marville, Camusot's son by his first marriage, and Pons's one genuine relation, albeit even he was a first cousin once removed.

This Camusot, President of a Chamber of the Court of

Appeal in Paris, had taken the name of his estate at Marville to distinguish himself from his father and a younger half-brother.

Cardot the retired notary had married his daughter to his successor, whose name was Berthier; and Pons, transferred as part of the connection, acquired a right to dine with the Berthiers "in the presence of a notary," as he put it.

This was the bourgeois empyrean which Pons called his "family," that upper world in which he so painfully reserved his right to a knife and fork.

Of all these houses, some ten in all, the one in which Pons ought to have met with the kindest reception should by rights have been his own cousin's; and, indeed, he paid most attention to President Camusot's family. But, alas! Mme. Camusot de Marville, daughter of the Sieur Thirion, usher of the cabinet to Louis XVIII. and Charles X., had never taken very kindly to her husband's first cousin, once removed. Pons had tried to soften this formidable relative; he wasted his time; for in spite of the pianoforte lessons which he gave gratuitously to Mlle. Camusot, a young woman with hair somewhat inclined to red, it was impossible to make a musician of her.

And now, at this very moment, as he walked with that precious object in his hand, Pons was bound for the President's house, where he always felt as if he were at the Tuileries itself, so heavily did the solemn green curtains, the carmelite-brown hangings, thick piled carpets, heavy furniture, and general atmosphere of magisterial severity oppress his soul. Strange as it may seem, he felt more at home in the Hotel Popinot, Rue Basse-du-Rempart, probably because it was full of works of art; for the master of the house, since he entered public life, had acquired a mania for collecting beautiful things, by way of contrast no doubt, for a politician is obliged to pay for secret services of the ugliest kind.

President de Marville lived in the Rue de Hanovre, in a house which his wife had bought ten years previously, on the death of her parents, for the Sieur and Dame Thirion

left their daughter about a hundred and fifty thousand francs, the savings of a lifetime. With its north aspect, the house looks gloomy enough seen from the street, but the back looks toward the south over the courtyard, with a rather pretty garden beyond it. As the President occupied the whole of the first floor, once the abode of a great financier of the time of Louis XIV., and the second was let to a wealthy old lady, the house wore a look of dignified repose befitting a magistrate's residence. President Camusot had invested all that he inherited from his mother, together with the savings of twenty years, in the purchase of the splendid Marville estate; a chateau (as fine a relic of the past as you will find to-day in Normandy) standing in a hundred acres of park land, and a fine dependent farm, nominally bringing in twelve thousand francs per annum, though, as it cost the President at least a thousand crowns to keep up a state almost princely in our days, his yearly revenue, "all told," as the saying is, was a bare nine thousand francs. With this and his salary, the President's income amounted to about twenty thousand francs; but though to all appearance a wealthy man, especially as one-half of his father's property would one day revert to him as the only child of the first marriage, he was obliged to live in Paris as befitted his official position, and M. and Mme. de Marville spent almost the whole of their incomes. Indeed, before the year 1834, they felt pinched.

This family schedule sufficiently explains why Mlle. de Marville, aged three-and-twenty, was still unwed, in spite of a hundred thousand francs of dowry and tempting prospects, frequently, skilfully, but so far vainly, held out. For the past five years Pons had listened to Mme. la Présidente's lamentations as she beheld one young lawyer after another led to the altar, while all the newly-appointed judges at the Tribunal were fathers of families already; and she, all this time, had displayed Mlle. de Marville's brilliant expectations before the undazzled eyes of young Vicomte Popinot, eldest son of the great man of the drug trade, he of whom it was said by the envious tongues of the neighborhood of the Rue

des Lombards that the Revolution of July had been brought about at least as much for his particular benefit as for the sake of the Orleans branch.

Arrived at the corner of the Rue de Choiseul and the Rue de Hanovre, Pons suffered from the inexplicable emotions which torment clear consciences; from a panic terror such as the worst of scoundrels might feel at sight of a policeman, an agony caused solely by a doubt as to Mme. de Marville's probable reception of him. That grain of sand, grating continually on the fibres of his heart, so far from losing its angles, grew more and more jagged, and the family in the Rue de Hanovre always sharpened the edges. Indeed, their unceremonious treatment and Pons's depreciation in value among them had affected the servants; and while they did not exactly fail in respect, they looked on the poor relation as a kind of beggar.

Pons's arch-enemy in the house was the ladies'-maid, a thin and wizened spinster, Madeleine Vivet by name. This Madeleine, in spite of, nay, perhaps on the strength of, a pimpled complexion and a viper-like length of spine, had made up her mind that some day she would be Mme. Pons. But in vain she dangled twenty thousand francs of savings before the old bachelor's eyes; Pons had declined happiness accompanied by so many pimples. From that time forth the Dido of the antechamber, who fain had called her master and mistress "cousin," wreaked her spite in petty ways upon the poor musician. She heard him on the stairs, and cried audibly, "Oh! here comes the spunger!" She stinted him of wine when she waited at dinner in the footman's absence; she filled the water-glass to the brim, to give him the difficult task of lifting it without spilling a drop; or she would pass the old man over altogether, till the mistress of the house would remind her (and in what a tone!—it brought the color to the poor cousin's face); or she would spill the gravy over his clothes. In short, she waged petty war after the manner of a petty nature, knowing that she could annoy an unfortunate superior with impunity.

Madeleine Vivet was Mme. de Marville's maid and house-keeper. She had lived with M. and Mme. Camusot de Marville since their marriage; she had shared the early struggles in the provinces when M. Camusot was a judge at Alençon; she had helped them to exist when M. Camusot, President of the Tribunal of Mantes, came to Paris, in 1828, to be an examining magistrate. She was, therefore, too much one of the family not to wish, for reasons of her own, to revenge herself upon them. Beneath her desire to play a trick upon her haughty and ambitious mistress, and to call her master her cousin, there surely lurked a long-stifled hatred, built up like an avalanche, upon the pebble of some past grievance.

"Here comes your M. Pons, madame, still wearing that spencer of his!" Madeleine came to tell the Présidente. "He really might tell me how he manages to make it look the same for five-and-twenty years together."

Mme. Camusot de Marville, hearing a man's footstep in the little drawing-room between the large drawing-room and her bedroom, looked at her daughter and shrugged her shoulders.

"You always make these announcements so cleverly that you leave me no time to think, Madeleine."

"Jean is out, madame; I was all alone; M. Pons rang the bell, I opened the door; and as he is almost one of the family, I could not prevent him from coming after me. There he is, taking off his spencer."

"Poor little puss!" said the Présidente, addressing her daughter, "we are caught. We shall have to dine at home now.—Let us see," she added, seeing that the "dear puss" wore a piteous face; "must we get rid of him for good?"

"Oh! poor man!" cried Mlle. Camusot, "deprive him of one of his dinners?"

Somebody coughed significantly in the next room by way of warning that he could hear.

"Very well, let him come in!" said Mme. Camusot, looking at Madeleine with another shrug.

"You are here so early, cousin, that you have come in upon us just as mother was about to dress," said Cécile Camusot in a coaxing tone. But Cousin Pons had caught sight of the Présidente's shrug, and felt so cruelly hurt that he could not find a compliment, and contented himself with the profound remark, "You are always charming, my little cousin."

Then, turning to the mother, he continued, with a bow: "You will not take it amiss, I think, if I have come a little earlier than usual, dear cousin; I have brought something for you; you once did me the pleasure of asking me for it."

Poor Pons! Every time he addressed the President, the President's wife, or Cécile as "cousin," he gave them excruciating annoyance. As he spoke, he drew a long, narrow cherry-wood box, marvellously carved, from his coat-pocket.

"Oh, did I?—I had forgotten," the lady answered dryly.

It was a heartless speech, was it not? Did not those few words deny all merit to the pains taken for her by the cousin whose one offence lay in the fact that he was a poor relation?

"But it is very kind of you, cousin," she added. "How much do I owe you for this little trifle?"

Pons quivered inwardly at the question. He had meant the trinket as a return for his dinners.

"I thought that you would permit me to offer it you—" he faltered out.

"What?" said Mme. Camusot. "Oh! but there need be no ceremony between us; we know each other well enough to wash our linen among ourselves. I know very well that you are not rich enough to give more than you get. And to go no further, it is quite enough that you should have spent a good deal of time in running about among the dealers—"

"If you were asked to pay the full price of the fan, my dear cousin, you would not care to have it," answered poor Pons, hurt and insulted; "it is one of Watteau's masterpieces, painted on both sides; but you may be quite easy,

cousin, I did not give one-hundredth part of its value as a work of art."

To tell a rich man that he is poor! you might as well tell the Archbishop of Granada that his homilies show signs of senility. Mme. la Présidente, proud of her husband's position, of the estate of Marville, and her invitations to court balls, was keenly susceptible on this point; and what was worse, the remark came from a poverty-stricken musician to whom she had been charitable.

"Then the people of whom you buy things of this kind are very stupid, are they?" she asked quickly.

"Stupid dealers are unknown in Paris," Pons answered almost dryly.

"Then you must be very clever," put in Cécile by way of calming the dispute.

"Clever enough to know a Lancret, a Watteau, a Pater, or Greuze when I see it, little cousin; but anxious, most of all, to please your dear mamma."

Mme. de Marville, ignorant and vain, was unwilling to appear to receive the slightest trifle from the parasite; and here her ignorance served her admirably, she did not even know the name of Watteau. And, on the other hand, if anything can measure the extent of the collector's passion, which, in truth, is one of the most deeply seated of all passions, rivalling the very vanity of the author—if anything can give an idea of the lengths to which a collector will go, it is the audacity which Pons displayed on this occasion, as he held his own against his lady cousin for the first time in twenty years. He was amazed at his own boldness. He made Cécile see the beauties of the delicate carving on the sticks of this wonder, and as he talked to her his face grew serene and gentle again. But without some sketch of the Présidente, it is impossible fully to understand the perturbation of heart from which Pons suffered.

Mme. de Marville had been short and fair, plump and fresh; at forty-six she was as short as ever, but she looked dried up. An arched forehead and thin lips, that had been

softly colored once, lent a soured look to a face naturally disdainful, and now grown hard and unpleasant with a long course of absolute domestic rule. Time had deepened her fair hair to a harsh chestnut hue; the pride of office, intensified by suppressed envy, looked out of eyes that had lost none of their brightness nor their satirical expression. As a matter of fact, Mme. Camusot de Marville felt almost poor in the society of self-made wealthy bourgeois with whom Pons dined. She could not forgive the rich retail druggist, ex-president of the Commercial Court, for his successive elevations as deputy, member of the Government, count and peer of France. She could not forgive her father-in-law for putting himself forward instead of his eldest son as deputy of his arrondissement after Popinot's promotion to the peerage. After eighteen years of services in Paris, she was still waiting for the post of Councillor of the Court of Cassation for her husband. It was Camusot's own incompetence, well known at the Law Courts, which excluded him from the Council. The Home Secretary of 1844 even regretted Camusot's nomination to the presidency of the Court of Indictments in 1834, though, thanks to his past experience as an examining magistrate, he made himself useful in drafting decrees.

These disappointments had told upon Mme. de Marville, who, moreover, had formed a tolerably correct estimate of her husband. A temper naturally shrewish was soured till she grew positively terrible. She was not old, but she had aged; she deliberately set herself to extort by fear all that the world was inclined to refuse her, and was harsh and rasping as a file. Caustic to excess, she had few friends among women; she surrounded herself with prim, elderly matrons of her own stamp, who lent each other mutual support, and people stood in awe of her. As for poor Pons, his relations with this fiend in petticoats were very much those of a schoolboy with the master whose one means of communication is the ferule.

The Présidente had no idea of the value of the gift. She was puzzled by her cousin's sudden access of audacity.

"Then, where did you find this?" inquired Cécile, as she looked closely at the trinket.

"In the Rue de Lappe. A dealer in second-hand furniture there had just brought it back with him from a château that is being pulled down near Dreux, Aulnay. Mme. de Pompadour used to spend part of her time there before she built Ménars. Some of the most splendid wood-carving ever known has been saved from destruction; Liénard (our most famous living wood-carver) has kept a couple of oval frames for models, as the *ne plus ultra* of the art, so fine it is.—There were treasures in that place. My man found the fan in the drawer of an inlaid what-not, which I should certainly have bought if I were collecting things of the kind, but it is quite out of the question—a single piece of Riesener's furniture is worth three or four thousand francs! People here in Paris are just beginning to find out that the famous French and German marquetry workers of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries composed perfect pictures in wood. It is a collector's business to be ahead of the fashion. Why, in five years' time, the Frankenthal ware, which I have been collecting these twenty years, will fetch twice the price of Sèvres *pâte tendre*."

"What is Frankenthal ware?" asked Cécile.

"That is the name for the porcelain made by the Elector of the Palatinate; it dates further back than our manufactory at Sèvres; just as the famous gardens at Heidelberg, laid waste by Turenne, had the bad luck to exist before the gardens of Versailles. Sèvres copied Frankenthal to a large extent.—In justice to the Germans, it must be said that they have done admirable work in Saxony and in the Palatinate."

Mother and daughter looked at one another as if Pons were speaking Chinese. No one can imagine how ignorant and exclusive Parisians are; they only learn what they are taught, and that only when they choose.

"And how do you know the Frankenthal ware when you see it?"

"Eh! by the mark!" cried Pons with enthusiasm. "There

is a mark on every one of those exquisite masterpieces. Frankenthal ware is marked with a C and T (for Charles Theodore) interlaced and crowned. On old Dresden china there are two crossed swords and the number of the order in gilt figures. Vincennes bears a hunting-horn; Vienna, a V closed and barred. You can tell Berlin by the two bars, Mayence by the wheel, and Sèvres by the two crossed L's. The queen's porcelain is marked A for Antoinette, with a royal crown above it. In the eighteenth century all the crowned heads of Europe had rival porcelain factories, and workmen were kidnapped. Watteau designed services for the Dresden factory; they fetch frantic prices at the present day. One has to know what one is about with them, too, for they are turning out imitations now at Dresden. Wonderful things they used to make; they will never make the like again—"

"Oh! pshaw!"

"No, cousin. Some inlaid work and some kinds of porcelain will never be made again, just as there will never be another Rafael, nor Titian, nor Rembrandt, nor Van Eyck, nor Cranach. . . . Well, now! there are the Chinese; they are very ingenious, very clever; they make modern copies of their 'grand mandarin' porcelain, as it is called. But a pair of vases of genuine old 'grand mandarin,' vases of the largest size, are worth six, eight, and ten thousand francs, while you can buy the modern replicas for a couple of hundred!"

"You are joking."

"You are astonished at the prices, but that is nothing, cousin. A dinner service of Sèvres *pâte tendre* (and *pâte tendre* is not porcelain)—a complete dinner-service of Sèvres *pâte tendre* for twelve persons is not merely worth a hundred thousand francs, but that is the price charged on the invoice. Such a dinner-service cost fifty thousand francs at Sèvres in 1750; I have seen the original invoices."

"But let us go back to this fan," said Cécile. Evidently in her opinion the trinket was an old-fashioned thing.

"You can understand that as soon as your dear mamma did me the honor of asking for a fan, I went the round of all the curiosity shops in Paris, but I found nothing fine enough. I wanted nothing less than a masterpiece for the dear Présidente, and thought of giving her one that once belonged to Marie Antoinette, the most beautiful of all celebrated fans. But yesterday I was dazzled by this divine *chef d'œuvre*, which certainly must have been ordered by Louis XV. himself. Do you ask how I came to look for fans in the Rue de Lappe, among an Auvergnat's stock of brass and iron and ormolu furniture? Well, I myself believe that there is an intelligence in works of art; they know art-lovers, they call to them—'Cht-tt!'"

Mme. de Marville shrugged her shoulders and looked at her daughter; Pons did not notice the rapid pantomime.

"I know all those sharpeners," continued Pons, "so I asked him, 'Anything fresh to-day, Daddy Monistrol?'—(for he always lets me look over his lots before the big buyers come)—and at that he began to tell me how Liénard, that did such beautiful work for the Government in the Chapelle de Dreux, had been at the Aulnay sale and rescued the carved panels out of the clutches of the Paris dealers, while their heads were running on china and inlaid furniture.—'I did not do much myself,' he went on, 'but I may make my travelling expenses out of *this*,' and he showed me a what-not; a marvell Boucher's designs executed in marquetry, and with such art!—One could have gone down on one's knees before it.—'Look, sir,' he said, 'I have just found this fan in a little drawer; it was locked, I had to force it open. You might tell me where I can sell it'—and with that he brings me out this little carved cherry-wood box.—'See,' says he, 'it is the kind of Pompadour that looks like decorated Gothic.'—'Yes,' I told him, 'the box is pretty; the box might suit me; but as for the fan, Monistrol, I have no Mme. Pons to give the old trinket to, and they make very pretty new ones nowadays; you can buy miracles of painting on vellum cheaply enough. There are two thousand painters

in Paris, you know.'—And I opened out the fan carelessly, keeping down my admiration, looking indifferently at those two exquisite little pictures, touched off with an ease fit to send you into raptures. I held Mme. de Pompadour's fan in my hand! Watteau had done his utmost for this.—'What do you want for the what-not?'—'Oh! a thousand francs; I have had a bid already.'—I offered him a price for the fan corresponding with the probable expenses of the journey. We looked each other in the eyes, and I saw that I had my man. I put the fan back into the box lest my Auvergnat should begin to look at it, and went into ecstasies over the box; indeed, it is a jewel.—'If I take it,' said I, 'it is for the sake of the box; the box tempts me. As for the what-not you will get more than a thousand francs for that. Just see how the brass is wrought; it is a model. There is business in it. . . . It has never been copied; it is a unique specimen, made solely for Mme. de Pompadour'—and so on, till my man, all on fire for his what-not, forgets the fan, and lets me have it for a mere trifle, because I have pointed out the beauties of his piece of Riesener's furniture. So here it is! but it needs a great deal of experience to make such a bargain as that. It is a duel, eye to eye; and who has such eyes as a Jew or an Auvergnat?"

The old artist's wonderful pantomime, his vivid, eager way of telling the story of the triumph of his shrewdness over the dealer's ignorance, would have made a subject for a Dutch painter; but it was all thrown away upon the audience. Mother and daughter exchanged cold, contemptuous glances.—"What an oddity!" they seemed to say.

"So it amuses you?" remarked Mme. de Marville. The question sent a cold chill through Pons; he felt a strong desire to slap the *Présidente*.

"Why, my dear cousin, that is the way to hunt down a work of art. You are face to face with antagonists that dispute the game with you. It is craft against craft! A work of art in the hands of a Norman, an Auvergnat, or a Jew, is like a princess guarded by magicians in a fairy tale."

"And how can you tell that this is by Wat—what do you call him?"

"Watteau, cousin. One of the greatest eighteenth century painters in France. Look! do you not see that it is his work?" (pointing to a pastoral scene, court shepherd swains and shepherdesses dancing in a ring). "The movement! the life in it! the coloring! There it is—see!—painted with a stroke of the brush, as a writing-master makes a flourish with a pen. Not a trace of effort here! And, turn it over, look—a ball in a drawing-room. Summer and Winter! And what ornaments! and how well preserved it is! The hinge-pin is gold, you see, and on cleaning it, I found a tiny ruby at either end."

"If it is so, cousin, I could not think of accepting such a valuable present from you. It would be better to lay up the money for yourself," said Mme. de Marville; but all the same, she asked no better than to keep the splendid fan.

"It is time that it should pass from the service of Vice into the hands of Virtue," said the good soul, recovering his assurance. "It has taken a century to work the miracle. No princess at Court, you may be sure, will have anything to compare with it; for, unfortunately, men will do more for a Pompadour than for a virtuous queen, such is human nature."

"Very well," Mme. de Marville said, laughing, "I will accept your present.—Cécile, my angel, go to Madeleine and see that dinner is worthy of your cousin."

Mme. de Marville wished to make matters even. Her request, made aloud, in defiance of all rules of good taste, sounded so much like an attempt to repay at once the balance due to the poor cousin, that Pons flushed red, like a girl found out in fault. The grain of sand was a little too large; for some moments he could only let it work in his heart. Cécile, a red-haired young woman, with a touch of pedantic affectation, combined her father's ponderous manner with a trace of her mother's hardness. She went and left poor Pons face to face with the terrible Présidente.

"How nice she is, my little Lili!" said the mother. She still called her Cécile by this baby name.

"Charming!" said Pons, twirling his thumbs.

"I *cannot* understand these times in which we live," broke out the Présidente. "What is the good of having a President of the Court of Appeal in Paris and a Commander of the Legion of Honor for your father, and for a grandfather the richest wholesale silk merchant in Paris, a deputy, and a millionaire that will be a peer of France some of these days?"

The President's zeal for the new Government had, in fact, recently been rewarded with a commander's ribbon—thanks to his friendship with Popinot, said the envious. Popinot himself, modest though he was, had, as has been seen, accepted the title of count, "for his son's sake," he told his numerous friends.

"Men look for nothing but money nowadays," said Cousin Pons. "No one thinks anything of you unless you are rich, and—"

"What would it have been if Heaven had spared my poor little Charles!—" cried the lady.

"Oh, with two children you would be poor," returned the cousin. "It practically means the division of the property. But you need not trouble yourself, cousin; Cécile is sure to marry sooner or later. She is the most accomplished girl I know."

To such depths had Pons fallen by adapting himself to the company of his entertainers! In their houses he echoed their ideas, and said the obvious thing, after the manner of a chorus in a Greek play. He did not dare to give free play to the artist's originality, which had overflowed in bright repartee when he was young; he had effaced himself, till he had almost lost his individuality; and if the real Pons appeared, as he had done a moment ago, he was immediately repressed.

"But I myself was married with only twenty thousand francs for my portion—"

"In 1819, cousin. And it was *you*, a woman with a head on your shoulders, and the royal protection of Louis XVIII."

"But still, my child is a perfect angel. She is clever, she has a warm heart, she will have a hundred thousand francs on her wedding day, to say nothing of the most brilliant expectations; and yet she stays on our hands," and so on and so on. For twenty minutes, Mme. de Marville talked on about herself and her Cécile, pitying herself after the manner of mothers in bondage to marriageable daughters.

Pons had dined at the house every week for twenty years, and Camusot de Marville was the only cousin he had in the world; but he had yet to hear the first word spoken as to his own affairs—nobody cared to know how he lived. Here and elsewhere the poor cousin was a kind of sink down which his relatives poured domestic confidences. His discretion was well known; indeed, was he not bound over to silence when a single imprudent word would have shut the doors of ten houses upon him? And he must combine his rôle of listener with a second part; he must applaud continually, smile on every one, accuse nobody, defend nobody; from his point of view, every one must be in the right. And so, in the house of his kinsman, Pons no longer counted as a man; he was a digestive apparatus.

In the course of a long tirade, Mme. Camusot de Marville avowed with due circumspection that she was prepared to take almost any son-in-law with her eyes shut. She was even disposed to think that at eight-and-forty or so a man with twenty thousand francs a year was a good match.

"Cécile is in her twenty-third year. If it should fall out so unfortunately that she is not married before she is five or six-and-twenty, it will be extremely hard to marry her at all. When a girl reaches that age, people want to know why she has been so long on hand. We are a good deal talked about in our set. We have come to an end of all the ordinary excuses—'She is so young.—She is so fond of her father and mother that she doesn't like to leave them.—She is so

happy at home.—She is hard to please, she would like a good name—' We are beginning to look silly; I feel that distinctly. And besides, Cécile is tired of waiting, poor child, she suffers—"

"In what way?" Pons was noodle enough to ask.

"Why, because it is humiliating to her to see all her girl friends married before her," replied the mother, with a duenna's air.

"But, cousin, has anything happened since the last time that I had the pleasure of dining here? Why do you think of men of eight-and-forty?" Pons inquired humbly.

"This has happened," returned the Présidente. "We were to have had an interview with a Court Councillor; his son is thirty years old and very well-to-do, and M. de Marville would have obtained a post in the audit-office for him and paid the money. The young man is a supernumerary there at present. And now they tell us that he has taken it into his head to rush off to Italy in the train of a duchess from the Bal Mabille. . . . It is nothing but a refusal in disguise. The fact is, the young man's mother is dead; he has an income of thirty thousand francs, and more to come at his father's death, and they don't care about the match for him. You have just come in in the middle of all this, dear cousin, so you must excuse our bad temper."

While Pons was casting about for the complimentary answer which invariably occurred to him too late when he was afraid of his host, Madeleine came in, handed a folded note to the Présidente, and waited for an answer. The note ran as follows:

"DEAR MAMMA—If we pretend that this note comes to you from papa at the Palais, and that he wants us both to dine with his friend because proposals have been renewed—then the cousin will go, and we can carry out our plan of going to the Popinots."

"Who brought the master's note?" the Présidente asked quickly.

"A lad from the Salle du Palais," the withered waiting woman unblushingly answered, and her mistress knew at once that Madeleine had woven the plot with Cécile, now at the end of her patience.

"Tell him that we will both be there at half-past five."

Madeleine had no sooner left the room than the Présidente turned to Cousin Pons with that insincere friendliness which is about as grateful to a sensitive soul as a mixture of milk and vinegar to the palate of an epicure.

"Dinner is ordered, dear cousin; you must dine without us; my husband has just sent word from the court that the question of the marriage has been reopened, and we are to dine with the Councillor. We need not stand on ceremony at all. Do just as if you were at home. I have no secrets from you; I am perfectly open with you, as you see. I am sure you would not wish to break off the little darling's marriage."

"I, cousin? On the contrary, I should like to find some one for her; but in my circle—"

"Oh, that is not at all likely," said the Présidente, cutting him short insolently. "Then you will stay, will you not? Cécile will keep you company while I dress."

"Oh! I can dine somewhere else, cousin."

Cruelly hurt though he was by her way of casting up his poverty to him, the prospect of being left alone with the servants was even more alarming.

"But why should you? Dinner is ready; you may just as well have it; if you do not, the servants will eat it."

At that atrocious speech Pons started up as if he had received a shock from a galvanic battery, bowed stiffly to the lady, and went to find his spencer. Now, it so happened that the door of Cécile's bedroom, beyond the little drawing-room, stood open, and, looking into the mirror, he caught sight of the girl shaking with laughter as she gesticulated and made signs to her mother. The old artist understood beyond a doubt that he had been the victim of some cowardly hoax. Pons went slowly down the stairs; he could not keep

back the tears. He understood that he had been turned out of the house, but why and wherefore he did not know.

"I am growing too old," he told himself. "The world has a horror of old age and poverty—two ugly things. After this I will not go anywhere unless I am asked."

Heroic resolve!

Downstairs the great gate was shut, as it usually is in houses occupied by the proprietor; the kitchen stood exactly opposite the porter's lodge, and the door was open. Pons was obliged to listen while Madeleine told the servants the whole story amid hilarious laughter. She had not expected him to leave so soon. The footman loudly applauded a joke at the expense of a visitor who was always coming to the house and never gave you more than three francs at the year's end.

"Yes," put in the cook; "but if he cuts up rough and does not come back, there will be three francs the less for some of us on New Year's Day."

"Eh! How is he to know?" retorted the footman.

"Pooh!" said Madeleine, "a little sooner or a little later—what difference does it make? The people at the other houses where he dines are so tired of him that they are going to turn him out."

"The gate if you please!"

Madeleine had scarcely uttered the words when they heard the old musician's call to the porter. It sounded like a cry of pain. There was a sudden silence in the kitchen.

"He heard!" the footman said.

"Well, and if he did, so much the worser, or rather so much the better," retorted Madeleine. "He is an arrant skinflint."

Poor Pons had lost none of the talk in the kitchen; he heard it all, even to the last word. He made his way home along the boulevards, in the same state, physical and mental, as an old woman after a desperate struggle with burglars. As he went he talked to himself in quick spasmodic jerks; his honor had been wounded, and the pain of it drove him

on as a gust of wind whirls away a straw. He found himself at last in the Boulevard du Temple; how he had come thither he could not tell. It was five o'clock, and, strange to say, he had completely lost his appetite.

But if the reader is to understand the revolution which Pons's unexpected return at that hour was to work in the Rue de Normandie, the promised biography of Mme. Cibot must be given in this place.

Any one passing along the Rue de Normandie might be pardoned for thinking that he was in some small provincial town. Grass runs to seed in the street, everybody knows everybody else, and the sight of a stranger is an event. The houses date back to the reign of Henri IV., when there was a scheme afoot for a quarter in which every street was to be named after a French province, and all should converge in a handsome square to which La France should stand god-mother. The Quartier de l'Europe was a revival of the same idea; history repeats itself everywhere in the world, and even in the world of speculation.

The house in which the two musicians used to live is an old mansion with a courtyard in front and a garden at the back; but the front part of the house which gives upon the street is comparatively modern, built during the eighteenth century when the Marais was a fashionable quarter. The friends lived at the back, on the second floor of the old part of the house. The whole building belonged to M. Pillerault, an old man of eighty, who left matters very much in the hands of M. and Mme. Cibot, his porters, for the past twenty-six years.

Now, as a porter cannot live by his lodge alone, the aforesaid Cibot had other means of gaining a livelihood; and supplemented his five per cent on the rental and his fagot from every cartload of wood by his own earnings as a tailor. In time Cibot ceased to work for the master tailors; he made a connection among the little tradespeople of the quarter, and enjoyed a monopoly of the repairs, renovations, and fine-drawing of all the coats and trousers in three adjacent streets.

The lodge was spacious and wholesome, and boasted a second room; wherefore the Cibot couple were looked upon as among the luckiest porters in the arrondissement.

Cibot, small and stunted, with a complexion almost olive-colored by reason of sitting day in day out Turk-fashion on a table level with the barred window, made about twelve or fourteen francs a week. He worked still, though he was fifty-eight years old, but fifty-eight is the porter's golden age; he is used to his lodge, he and his room fit each other like the shell and the oyster, and "he is known in the neighborhood."

Mme. Cibot, sometime opener of oysters at the Cadran Bleu, after all the adventures which come unsought to the belle of an oyster-bar, left her post for love of Cibot at the age of twenty-eight. The beauty of a woman of the people is short-lived, especially if she is planted espalier fashion at a restaurant door. Her features are hardened by puffs of hot air from the kitchen; the color of the heeltaps of customers' bottles, finished in the company of the waiters, gradually filters into her complexion—no beauty is full blown so soon as the beauty of an oyster-opener. Luckily for Mme. Cibot, lawful wedlock and a portress's life were offered to her just in time; while she still preserved a comeliness of a masculine order slandered by rivals of the Rue de Normandie, who called her "a great blowsy thing," Mme. Cibot might have sat as a model to Rubens. Those flesh tints reminded you of the appetizing sheen on a pat of Isigny butter; but plump as she was, no woman went about her work with more agility. Mme. Cibot had attained the time of life when women of her stamp are obliged to shave—which is as much as to say that she had reached the age of forty-eight. A porter's wife with a mustache is one of the best possible guarantees of respectability and security that a landlord can have. If Delacroix could have seen Mme. Cibot leaning proudly on her broom handle, he would assuredly have painted her as Bellona.

Strange as it may seem, the circumstances of the Cibots, man and wife (in the style of an indictment), were one day

to affect the lives of the two friends; wherefore the chronicler, as in duty bound, must give some particulars as to the Cibots' lodge.

The house brought in about eight thousand francs, for there were three complete sets of apartments—back and front, on the side nearest the Rue de Normandie, as well as the three floors in the older mansion between the courtyard and the garden, and a shop kept by a marine store-dealer named Rémonencq, which fronted on the street. During the past few months this Rémonencq had begun to deal in old curiosities, and knew the value of Pons's collection so well that he took off his hat whenever the musician came in or went out.

A sou in the livre on eight thousand francs therefore brought in about four hundred francs to the Cibots. They had no rent to pay and no expenses for firing; Cibot's earnings amounted on an average to seven or eight hundred francs, add tips at the New Year, and the pair had altogether an income of sixteen hundred francs, every penny of which they spent, for the Cibots lived and fared better than working people usually do. "One can only live once," La Cibot used to say. She was born during the Revolution, you see, and had never learned her Catechism.

The husband of this portress with the unblenching tawny eyes was an object of envy to the whole fraternity, for La Cibot had not forgotten the knowledge of cookery picked up at the Cadran Bleu. So it had come to pass that the Cibots had passed the prime of life, and saw themselves on the threshold of old age without a hundred francs put by for the future. Well clad and well fed, they enjoyed among the neighbors, it is true, the respect due to twenty-six years of strict honesty; for if they had nothing of their own, they "hadn't nothing belonging to nobody else," according to La Cibot, who was prodigal of negatives. "There wasn't never such a love of a man," she would say to her husband. Do you ask why? You might as well ask the reason of her indifference in matters of religion.

Both of them were proud of a life lived in open day, of the esteem in which they were held for six or seven streets round about, and of the autocratic rule permitted to them by the proprietor ("perprietor," they called him); but in private they groaned because they had no money lying at interest. Cibot complained of pains in his hands and legs, and his wife would lament that her poor, dear Cibot should be forced to work at his age; and, indeed, the day is not far distant when a porter after thirty years of such a life will cry shame upon the injustice of the Government and clamor for the ribbon of the Legion of Honor. Every time that the gossip of the quarter brought news of such and such a servant-maid, left an annuity of three or four hundred francs after eight or ten years of service, the porters' lodges would resound with complaints, which may give some idea of the consuming jealousies in the lowest walks of life in Paris.

"Oh, indeed! It will never happen to the like of us to have our names mentioned in a will! We have no luck, but we do more than servants, for all that. We fill a place of trust; we give receipts, we are on the lookout for squalls, and yet we are treated like dogs, neither more nor less, and that's the truth!"

"Some find fortune and some miss fortune," said Cibot, coming in with a coat.

"If I had left Cibot here in his lodge and taken a place as cook, we should have had our thirty thousand francs out at interest," cried Mme. Cibot, standing chatting with a neighbor, her hands on her prominent hips. "But I didn't understand how to get on in life; housed inside of a snug lodge and firing found and want for nothing, but that is all."

In 1836 when the friends took up their abode on the second floor, they brought about a sort of revolution in the Cibot household. It befell on this wise. Schmucke, like his friend Pons, usually arranged that the porter or the porter's wife should undertake the cares of housekeeping; and being both of one mind on this point when they came to live in the Rue de Normandie, Mme. Cibot became their housekeeper at the

rate of twenty-five francs per month—twelve francs fifty centimes for each of them. Before the year was out, the emeritus portress reigned in the establishment of the two old bachelors, as she reigned everywhere in the house belonging to M. Pille-rault, great-uncle of Mme. la Comtesse Popinot. Their business was her business; she called them "my gentlemen." And at last, finding the pair of nutcrackers mild as lambs, easy to live with, and by no means suspicious—perfect children, in fact—her heart, the heart of a woman of the people, prompted her to protect, adore, and serve them with such thorough devotion that she read them a lecture now and again, and saved them from the impositions which swell the cost of living in Paris. For twenty-five francs a month, the two old bachelors inadvertently acquired a mother.

As they became aware of Mme. Cibot's full value, they gave her outspoken praises, and thanks, and little presents which strengthened the bonds of the domestic alliance. Mme. Cibot a thousand times preferred appreciation to money payments; it is a well-known fact that the sense that one is appreciated makes up for a deficiency in wages. And Cibot did all that he could for his wife's two gentlemen, and ran errands and did repairs at half-price for them.

The second year brought a new element into the friendship between the lodge and the second floor, and Schmucke concluded a bargain which satisfied his indolence and desire for a life without cares. For thirty sous per day, or forty-five francs per month, Mme. Cibot undertook to provide Schmucke with breakfast and dinner; and Pons, finding his friend's breakfast very much to his mind, concluded a separate treaty for that meal only at the rate of eighteen francs. This arrangement, which added nearly ninety francs every month to the takings of the porter and his wife, made two inviolable beings of the lodgers; they became angels, cherubs, divinities. It is very doubtful whether the king of the French, who is supposed to understand economy, is as well served as the pair of nutcrackers used to be in those days.

For them the milk issued pure from the can; they en-

joyed a free perusal of all the morning papers taken by other lodgers, later risers, who were told, if need be, that the newspapers had not come yet. Mme. Cibot, moreover, kept their clothes, their rooms, and the landing as clean as a Flemish interior. As for Schmucke, he enjoyed unhoped-for happiness; Mme. Cibot had made life easy for him; he paid her about six francs a month, and she took charge of his linen, washing, and mending. Altogether his expenses amounted to sixty-six francs per month (for he spent fifteen francs on tobacco), and sixty-six francs multiplied by twelve produces the sum-total of seven hundred and ninety-two francs. Add two hundred and twenty francs for rent, rates, and taxes, and you have a thousand and twelve francs. Cibot was Schmucke's tailor; his clothes cost him on an average a hundred and fifty francs, which further swells the total to the sum of twelve hundred. On twelve hundred francs per annum this profound philosopher lived. How many people in Europe, whose one thought it is to come to Paris and live there, will be agreeably surprised to learn that you may exist in comfort upon an income of twelve hundred francs in the Rue de Normandie in the Marais, under the wing of a Mme. Cibot.

Mme. Cibot, to resume the story, was amazed beyond expression to see Pons, good man, return at five o'clock in the evening. Such a thing had never happened before; and not only so, but "her gentleman" had given her no greeting—had not so much as seen her!

"Well, well, Cibot," said she to her spouse, "M. Pons has come in for a million, or gone out of his mind!"

"That is how it looks to me," said Cibot, dropping the coat-sleeve in which he was making a "dart," in tailors' language.

The savory odor of a stew pervaded the whole courtyard, as Pons returned mechanically home. Mme. Cibot was dishing up Schmucke's dinner, which consisted of scraps of boiled beef from a little cook-shop not above doing a little trade of this kind. These morsels were fricasseed in brown

butter, with thin slices of onion, until the meat and vegetables had absorbed the gravy, and this true porter's dish was browned to the right degree. With that fricassee, prepared with loving care for Cibot and Schmucke, and accompanied by a bottle of beer and a piece of cheese, the old German music-master was quite content. Not King Solomon in all his glory, be sure, could dine better than Schmucke. A dish of boiled beef fricasseed with onions, scraps of *sauté* chicken, or beef and parsley, or venison, or fish served with a sauce of La Cibot's own invention (a sauce with which a mother might unsuspectingly eat her child)—such was Schmucke's ordinary, varying with the quantity and quality of the remnants of food supplied by boulevard restaurants to the cook-shop in the Rue Boucherat. Schmucke took everything that "goot Montame Zipod" gave him, and was content, and so from day to day "goot Montame Zipod" cut down the cost of his dinner, until it could be served for twenty sous.

"It won't be long afore I find out what is the matter with him, poor dear," said Mme. Cibot to her husband, "for here is M. Schmucke's dinner all ready for him."

As she spoke, she covered the deep earthenware dish with a plate; and, notwithstanding her age, she climbed the stair and reached the door before Schmucke opened it to Pons.

"Vat is de matter mit you, mein goot friend?" asked the German, scared by the expression on Pons's face.

"I will tell you all about it; but I have come home to have dinner with you—"

"Tinner! tinner!" cried Schmucke in ecstasy; "but it is imbossible!" the old German added, as he thought of his friend's gastronomical tastes; and at that very moment he caught sight of Mme. Cibot listening to the conversation, as she had a right to do as his lawful housewife. Struck with one of those happy inspirations which only enlighten a friend's heart, he marched up to the portress and drew her out to the stairhead.

"Montame Zipod," he said, "der goot Bons is fond of goot dings; shoost go rount to der *Catran pleu* und order a dainty liddle tinner, mit anjovies und maggaroni. Ein tinner for Lugullus in vact."

"What is that?" inquired La Cibot.

"Oh! ah!" returned Schmucke, "it is veal *à la pourcheoise*" (*bourgeoise*, he meant), "a nice fisch, ein pottle off Porteaux, und nice dings, der fery best dey haf, like groquettes of rice und shmoked pacon! Bay for it, und say nodings; I vill gif you back de monny to-morrow morning."

Back went Schmucke, radiant and rubbing his hands; but his expression slowly changed to a look of bewildered astonishment as he heard Pons's story of the troubles that had but just now overwhelmed him in a moment. He tried to comfort Pons by giving him a sketch of the world from his own point of view. Paris, in his opinion, was a perpetual hurly-burly, the men and women in it were whirled away by a tempestuous waltz; it was no use expecting anything of the world, which only looked at the outsides of things, "und not at der inderior." For the hundredth time he related how that the only three pupils for whom he had really cared, for whom he was ready to die, the three who had been fond of him, and even allowed him a little pension of nine hundred francs, each contributing three hundred to the amount—his favorite pupils had quite forgotten to come to see him; and so swift was the current of Parisian life which swept them away, that if he called at their houses, he had not succeeded in seeing them once in three years—(it is a fact, however, that Schmucke had always thought fit to call on these great ladies at ten o'clock in the morning!)—still, his pension was paid quarterly through the medium of solicitors.

"Und yet, dey are hearts of gold," he concluded. "Dey are my liddle Saint Cecilias, sharming vimmen: Montame de Bordentuère, Montame te Fantenesse, und Montame du Dilet. Gif I see dem at all, it is at die Jambs Elusées, und dey do not see me . . . yet dey are ver' fond of me, und I might go to dine mit dem, und dey would be ver' bleased.

to see me; und I might go to deir country-houses, but I would much rader be mit mine friend Bons, because I kann see him venefer I like, und efery tay."

Pons took Schmucke's hand and grasped it between his own. All that was passing in his inmost soul was communicated in that tight pressure. And so for a while the friends sat like two lovers, meeting at last after a long absence.

"Tine here, efery tay!" broke out Schmucke, inwardly blessing Mme. de Marville for her hardness of heart. "Look here! Ve shall go a prick-à-pracking togeders, und der teufel shall nefer show his tail here."

"Ve shall go prick-à-pracking togeders!"—for the full comprehension of those truly heroic words, it must be confessed that Schmucke's ignorance of bric-à-brac was something of the densest. It required all the strength of his friendship to keep him from doing heedless damage in the sitting-room and study which did duty as a museum for Pons. Schmucke, wholly absorbed in music, a composer for love of his art, took about as much interest in his friend's little trifles as a fish might take in a flower-show at the Luxembourg, supposing that it had received a ticket of admission. A certain awe which he certainly felt for the marvels was simply a reflection of the respect which Pons showed his treasures when he dusted them. To Pons's exclamation of admiration, he was wont to reply with a "Yes, it is ver' bretty," as a mother answers baby-gestures with meaningless baby-talk. Seven times since the friends had lived together, Pons had exchanged a good clock for a better one, till at last he possessed a timepiece in Boule's first and best manner, for Boule had two manners, as Rafael had three. In the first he combined ebony and copper; in the second—contrary to his convictions—he sacrificed to tortoise-shell, working miracles to outstrip his rivals, the inventors of tortoise-shell inlaid work. In spite of Pons's learned dissertations, Schmucke never could see the slightest difference between the magnificent clock in Boule's first manner and

its six predecessors; but, for Pons's sake, Schmucke was even more careful among the "chimcracks" than Pons himself. So it should not be surprising that Schmucke's sublime words comforted Pons in his despair; for "Ve shall go prick-à-pracking togeders," meant, being interpreted, "I will put money into brie-à-brac, if you will only dine here."

"Dinner is ready," Mme. Cibot announced, with astonishing self-possession.

It is not difficult to imagine Pons's surprise when he saw and relished the dinner due to Schmucke's friendship. Sensations of this kind, that come so rarely in a lifetime, are never the outcome of the constant, close relationship by which friend daily says to friend, "You are a second self to me"; for this, too, becomes a matter of use and wont. It is only by contact with the barbarism of the world without that the happiness of that intimate life is revealed to us as a sudden glad surprise. It is the outer world which renews the bond between friend and friend, lover and lover, all their lives long, wherever two great souls are knit together by friendship or by love.

Pons brushed away two big tears, Schmucke himself wiped his eyes; and though nothing was said, the two were closer friends than before. Little friendly nods and glances exchanged across the table were like balm to Pons, soothing the pain caused by the sand dropped in his heart by the President's wife. As for Schmucke, he rubbed his hands till they were sore; for a new idea had occurred to him, one of those great discoveries which cause a German no surprise, unless they sprout up suddenly in a Teuton brain frost-bound by the awe and reverence due to sovereign princes.

"Mine goot Bons?" began Schmucke.

"I can guess what you mean; you would like us both to dine together here, every day—"

"Gif only I vas rich enof to lif like dis efery tay—" began the good German in a melancholy voice. But here Mme. Cibot appeared upon the scene. Pons had given her an order for the theatre from time to time, and stood in con-

sequence almost as high in her esteem and affection as her boarder Schmucke.

"Lord love you," said she, "for three francs and wine extra I can give you both such a dinner every day that you will be ready to lick the plates as clean as if they were washed."

"It is a fact," Schmucke remarked, "dat die tinnars dat Montame Zipod cooks for me are better as de messes dey eat at der royal dable!" In his eagerness, Schmucke, usually so full of respect for the powers that be, so far forgot himself as to imitate the irreverent newspapers which scoffed at the "fixed-price" dinners of Royalty.

"Really?" said Pons. "Very well, I will try to-morrow."

And at that promise Schmucke sprang from one end of the table to the other, sweeping off tablecloth, bottles, and dishes as he went and hugged Pons to his heart. So might gas rush to combine with gas.

"Vat happiness!" cried he.

Mme. Cibot was quite touched. "Monsieur is going to dine here every day!" she cried proudly.

That excellent woman departed downstairs again in ignorance of the event which had brought about this result, entered her room like Josépha in "William Tell," set down the plates and dishes on the table with a bang, and called aloud to her husband:

"Cibot! run to the Café Ture for two small cups of coffee, and tell the man at the stove that it is for me."

Then she sat down and rested her hands on her massive knees, and gazed out of the window at the opposite wall.

"I will go to-night and see what Ma'am Fontaine says," she thought. (Madame Fontaine told fortunes on the cards for all the servants in the quarter of the Marais.) "Since these two gentlemen came here, we have put two thousand francs in the savings bank. Two thousand francs in eight years! What luck! Would it be better to make no profit out of M. Pons's dinner and keep him here at home? Ma'am Fontaine's hen will tell me that."

Three years ago Mme. Cibot had begun to cherish a hope that her name might be mentioned in "her gentlemen's" wills; she had redoubled her zeal since that covetous thought tardily sprouted up in the midst of that so honest mustache. Pons hitherto had dined abroad, eluding her desire to have both of "her gentlemen" entirely under her management; his "troubadour" collector's life had scared away certain vague ideas which hovered in La Cibot's brain; but now her shadowy projects assumed the formidable shape of a definite plan, dating from that memorable dinner. Fifteen minutes later she reappeared in the dining-room with two cups of excellent coffee, flanked by a couple of tiny glasses of *kirschwasser*.

"Long lif Montame Zipod!" cried Schmucke; "she haf guessed right!"

The diner-out bemoaned himself a little, while Schmucke met his lamentations with coaxing fondness, like a home pigeon welcoming back a wandering bird. Then the pair set out for the theatre.

Schmucke could not leave his friend in the condition to which he had been brought by the Camusots—mistresses and servants. He knew Pons so well; he feared lest some cruel, sad thought should seize on him at his conductor's desk, and undo all the good done by his welcome home to the nest.

And Schmucke brought his friend back on his arm through the streets at midnight. A lover could not be more careful of his lady. He pointed out the edges of the curbstones, he was on the lookout whenever they stepped on or off the pavement, ready with a warning if there was a gutter to cross. Schmucke could have wished that the streets were paved with cotton-down; he would have had a blue sky overhead, and Pons should hear the music which all the angels in heaven were making for him. He had won the lost province in his friend's heart!

For nearly three months Pons and Schmucke dined together every day. Pons was obliged to retrench at once;

for dinner at forty-five francs a month and wine at thirty-five meant precisely eighty francs less to spend on bric-à-brac. And very soon, in spite of all that Schmucke could do, in spite of his little German jokes, Pons fell to regretting the delicate dishes, the liqueurs, the good coffee, the table-talk, the insincere politeness, the guests, and the gossip, and the houses where he used to dine. On the wrong side of sixty a man cannot break himself of a habit of thirty-six years' growth. Wine at a hundred and thirty francs per hogshead is scarcely a generous liquid in a *gourmet's* glass; every time that Pons raised it to his lips he thought, with infinite poignant regret, of the exquisite wines in his entertainers' cellars.

In short, at the end of three months, the cruel pangs which had gone near to break Pons's sensitive heart had died away; he forgot everything but the charms of society; and languished for them like some elderly slave of a petticoat compelled to leave the mistress who too repeatedly deceives him. In vain he tried to hide his profound and consuming melancholy; it was too plain that he was suffering from one of the mysterious complaints which the mind brings upon the body.

A single symptom will throw light upon this case of nostalgia (as it were) produced by breaking away from an old habit; in itself it is trifling, one of the myriad nothings which are as rings in a coat of chain-mail enveloping the soul in a network of iron. One of the keenest pleasures of Pons's old life, one of the joys of the dinner-table parasite at all times, was the "surprise," the thrill produced by the extra dainty dish added triumphantly to the bill of fare by the mistress of a bourgeois house, to give a festal air to the dinner. Pons's stomach hankered after that gastronomical satisfaction. Mme. Cibot, in the pride of her heart, enumerated every dish beforehand; a salt and savor once periodically recurrent had vanished utterly from daily life. Dinner proceeded without *le plat couvert*, as our grandsires called it. Pons had too much delicacy to grumble; but if the case

of unappreciated genius is hard, it goes harder still with the stomach whose claims are ignored. Slighted affection, a subject of which too much has been made, is founded upon an illusory longing; for if the creature fails, love can turn to the Creator who has treasures to bestow. But the stomach! . . . Nothing can be compared to its sufferings; for, in the first place, one must live.

Pons thought wistfully of certain creams—surely the poetry of cookery!—of certain white sauces, masterpieces of the art; of truffled chickens, fit to melt your heart; and above these, and more than all these, of the famous Rhine carp, only known at Paris, served with what condiments! There were days when Pons, thinking upon Count Popinot's cook, would sigh aloud, "Ah, Sophie!" Any passer-by hearing the exclamation might have thought that the old man referred to a lost mistress; but his fancy dwelt upon something rarer, on a fat Rhine carp with a sauce, thin in the sauce-boat, creamy upon the palate, a sauce that deserved the Montyon prize! The conductor of the orchestra, living on memories of past dinners, grew visibly leaner; he was pining away, a victim to gastric nostalgia.

By the beginning of the fourth month (toward the end of January, 1845) Pons's condition attracted attention at the theatre. The flute, a young man named Wilhelm, like almost all Germans, and Schwab, to distinguish him from all other Wilhelms, if not from all other Schwabs, judged it expedient to open Schmucke's eyes to his friend's state of health. It was a first performance of a piece in which Schmucke's instruments were all required.

"The old gentleman is failing," said the flute; "there is something wrong somewhere; his eyes are heavy, and he doesn't beat time as he used to do," added Wilhelm Schwab, indicating Pons as he gloomily took his place.

"Dat is always de vay, gif a man is sixty years old," answered Schmucke.

The Highland widow, in "The Chronicles of the Canon-gate," sent her son to his death to have him beside her for

twenty-four hours; and Schmucke could have sacrificed Pons for the sake of seeing his face every day across the dinner-table.

"Everybody in the theatre is anxious about him," continued the flute; "and, as the *première danseuse*, Mlle. Brise-tout, says, 'he makes hardly any noise now when he blows his nose.' "

And, indeed, a peal like the blast of a horn used to resound through the old musician's bandanna handkerchief whenever he raised it to that lengthy and cavernous feature. The President's wife had more frequently found fault with him on that score than on any other.

"I would gif a goot teal to amuse him," said Schmucke, "he gets so dull."

"M. Pons always seems so much above the like of us poor devils that, upon my word, I didn't dare to ask him to my wedding," said Wilhelm Schwab. "I am going to be married—"

"How?" demanded Schmucke.

"Oh! quite properly," returned Wilhelm Schwab, taking Schmucke's quaint inquiry for a gibe, of which that perfect Christian was quite incapable.

"Come, gentlemen, take your places!" called Pons, looking round at his little army, as the stage manager's bell rang for the overture.

The piece was a dramatized fairy tale, a pantomime called "The Devil's Betrothed," which ran for two hundred nights. In the interval, after the first act, Wilhelm Schwab and Schmucke were left alone in the orchestra, with a house at a temperature of thirty-two degrees Réaumur.

"Tell me your hishdory," said Schmucke.

"Look there! Do you see that young man in the box yonder? . . . Do you recognize him?"

"Nefer a pit—"

"Ah? That is because he is wearing yellow gloves and shines with all the radiance of riches, but that is my friend Fritz Brunner out of Frankfort-on-the-Main."

"Dat used to kumm to see du blay und sit peside you in der orghestra?"

"The same. You would not believe he could look so different, would you?"

The hero of the promised story was a German of that particular type in which the sombre irony of Goethe's Mephistopheles is blended with a homely cheerfulness found in the romances of Auguste La Fontaine of pacific memory; but the predominating element in the compound of artlessness and guile, of shopkeeper's shrewdness, and the studied carelessness of a member of the Jockey Club, was that form of disgust which set a pistol in the hands of a young Werther, bored to death less by Charlotte than by German princes. It was a thoroughly German face, full of cunning, full of simplicity, stupidity, and courage; the knowledge which brings weariness, the worldly wisdom which the veriest child's trick leaves at fault, the abuse of beer and tobacco—all these were there to be seen in it, and to heighten the contrast of opposed qualities, there was a wild diabolical gleam in the fine blue eyes with the jaded expression.

Dressed with all the elegance of a city man, Fritz Brunner sat in full view of the house, displaying a bald crown of the tint beloved by Titian, and a few stray fiery red hairs on either side of it; a remnant spared by debauchery and want, that the prodigal might have a right to spend money with the hairdresser when he should come into his fortune. A face, once fair and fresh as the traditional portrait of Jesus Christ, had grown harder since the advent of a red mustache; a tawny beard lent it an almost sinister look. The bright blue eyes had lost something of their clearness in the struggle with distress. The countless courses by which a man sells himself and his honor in Paris had left their traces upon his eyelids and carved lines about the eyes, into which a mother once looked with a mother's rapture to find a copy of her own fashioned by God's hand.

This precocious philosopher, this wizened youth was the work of a stepmother.

Herewith begins the curious history of a prodigal son of Frankfort-on-the Main—the most extraordinary and astounding portent ever beheld by that well-conducted, if central, city.

Gideon Brunner, father of the aforesaid Fritz, was one of the famous innkeepers of Frankfort, a tribe who make law-authorized incisions in travellers' purses with the connivance of the local bankers. An innkeeper and an honest Calvinist to boot, he had married a converted Jewess and laid the foundations of his prosperity with the money she brought him.

When the Jewess died, leaving a son Fritz, twelve years of age, under the joint guardianship of his father and maternal uncle, a furrier at Leipsic, head of the firm of Virnaz and Company, Brunner senior was compelled by his brother-in-law (who was by no means as soft as his peltry) to invest little Fritz's money, a goodly quantity of current coin of the realm, with the house of Al-Sartchild. Not a penny of it was he allowed to touch. So, by way of revenge for the Israelite's pertinacity, Brunner senior married again. It was impossible, he said, to keep his huge hotel single-handed; it needed a woman's eye and hand. Gideon Brunner's second wife was an innkeeper's daughter, a very pearl, as he thought; but he had had no experience of only daughters spoiled by father and mother.

The second Mme. Brunner behaved as German girls may be expected to behave when they are frivolous and wayward. She squandered her fortune, she avenged the first Mme. Brunner by making her husband as miserable a man as you could find in the compass of the free city of Frankfort-on-the-Main, where the millionnaires, it is said, are about to pass a law compelling womenkind to cherish and obey them alone. She was partial to all the varieties of vinegar commonly called Rhine wine in Germany; she was fond of *articles Paris*, of horses and dress; indeed, the one expensive taste which she had not was a liking for women. She took a dislike to little Fritz, and would perhaps have driven him mad if that young offspring of Calvinism and Judaism

had not had Frankfort for his cradle and the firm of Vir laz at Leipsic for his guardian. Uncle Vir laz, however, deep in his furs, confined his guardianship to the safe-keeping of Fritz's silver marks, and left the boy to the tender mercies of this stepmother.

That hyena in woman's form was the more exasperated against the pretty child, the lovely Jewess's son, because she herself could have no children in spite of efforts worthy of a locomotive engine. A diabolical impulse prompted her to plunge her young stepson, at twenty-one years of age, into dissipations contrary to all German habits. The wicked German hoped that English horses, Rhine vinegar, and Goethe's Marguerites would ruin the Jewess's child and shorten his days; for when Fritz came of age, Uncle Vir laz had handed over a very pretty fortune to his nephew. But while roulette at Baden and elsewhere, and boon companions (Wilhelm Schwab among them) devoured the substance accumulated by Uncle Vir laz, the prodigal son himself remained by the will of Providence to point a moral to younger brothers in the free city of Frankfort; parents held him up as a warning and an awful example to their offspring to scare them into steady attendance in their cast-iron counting-houses, lined with silver marks.

But so far from perishing in the flower of his age, Fritz Brunner had the pleasure of laying his stepmother in one of those charming little German cemeteries, in which the Teuton indulges his unbridled passion for horticulture under the specious pretext of honoring his dead. And as the second Mme. Brunner expired while the authors of her being were yet alive, Brunner senior was obliged to bear the loss of the sums of which his wife had drained his coffers, to say nothing of other ills which had told upon a Herculean constitution, till at the age of sixty-seven the innkeeper had wizened and shrunk as if the famous Borgia's poison had undermined his system. For ten whole years he had supported his wife, and now he inherited nothing! The innkeeper was a second ruin of Heidelberg, repaired continually, it is true, by

travellers' hotel bills, much as the remains of the castle of Heidelberg itself are repaired to sustain the enthusiasm of the tourists who flock to see so fine and well-preserved a relic of antiquity.

At Frankfort the disappointment caused as much talk as a failure. People pointed out Brunner, saying, "See what a man may come to with a bad wife that leaves him nothing and a son brought up in the French fashion."

In Italy and Germany the French nation is the root of all evil, the target for all bullets. "But the god pursuing his way—" (For the rest, see Lefranc de Pompignan's Ode.)

The wrath of the proprietor of the Grand Hotel de Hollande fell on others besides the travellers, whose bills were swelled with his resentment. When his son was utterly ruined, Gideon, regarding him as the indirect cause of all his misfortunes, refused him bread and salt, fire, lodging, and tobacco—the force of the paternal malediction in a German and an innkeeper could no further go. Whereupon the local authorities, making no allowance for the father's misdeeds, regarded him as one of the most ill-used persons in Frankfort-on-the-Main, came to his assistance, fastened a quarrel on Fritz (*une querelle d'Allemand*), and expelled him from the territory of the free city. Justice in Frankfort is no whit wiser nor more humane than elsewhere, albeit the city is the seat of the German Diet. It is not often that a magistrate traces back the stream of wrongdoing and misfortune to the holder of the urn from which the first beginnings trickled forth. If Brunner forgot his son, his son's friends speedily followed the old innkeeper's example.

Ah! if the journalists, the dandies, and some few fair Parisians among the audience wondered how that German with the tragical countenance had cropped up on a first night to occupy a side box all to himself when fashionable Paris filled the house—if these could have seen the history played out upon the stage before the prompter's box, they would have found it far more interesting than the transformation scenes of "The Devil's Betrothed," though indeed it was the

two hundred thousandth representation of a sublime allegory performed aforetime in Mesopotamia three thousand years before Christ was born.

Fritz betook himself on foot to Strasburg, and there found what the prodigal son of the Bible failed to find—to wit, a friend. And herein is revealed the superiority of Alsace, where so many generous hearts beat to show Germany the beauty of a combination of Gallic wit and Teutonic solidity. Wilhelm Schwab, but lately left in possession of a hundred thousand francs by the death of both parents, opened his arms, his heart, his house, his purse to Fritz. As for describing Fritz's feelings, when dusty, down on his luck, and almost like a leper, he crossed the Rhine and found a real twenty-franc piece held out by the hand of a real friend—that moment transcends the powers of the prose-writer; Pindar alone could give it forth to humanity in Greek that should rekindle the dying warmth of friendship in the world.

Put the names of Fritz and Wilhelm beside those of Damon and Pythias, Castor and Pollux, Orestes and Pylades, Dubreuil and Pmejah, Schmucke and Pons, and all the names that we imagine for the two friends of Monomotapa, for La Fontaine (man of genius though he was) has made of them two disembodied spirits—they lack reality. The two new names may join the illustrious company, and with so much the more reason, since that Wilhelm who had helped to drink Fritz's inheritance now proceeded, with Fritz's assistance, to devour his own substance; smoking, needless to say, every known variety of tobacco.

The pair, strange to relate, squandered the property in the dullest, stupidest, most commonplace fashion, in Strasburg *brasseries*, in the company of ballet-girls of the Strasburg theatres, and little Alsatians who had not a rag of a tattered reputation left.

Every morning they would say, "We really must stop this, and make up our minds and do something or other with the money that is left."

"Pooh!" Fritz would retort, "just one more day, and to-morrow . . ." ah! to-morrow.

In the lives of Prodigal Sons, *To-day* is a prodigious coxcomb, but *To-morrow* is a very poltroon, taking fright at the big words of his predecessor. *To-day* is the truculent captain of old world comedy, *To-morrow* the clown of modern pantomime.

When the two friends had reached their last thousand-franc note, they took places in the mail-coach, styled Royal, and departed for Paris, where they installed themselves in the attics of the Hôtel du Rhin, in the Rue du Mail, the property of one Graff, formerly Gideon Brunner's head-waiter. Fritz found a situation as clerk in the Kellers' bank (on Graff's recommendation), with a salary of six hundred francs. And a place as book-keeper was likewise found for Wilhelm, in the business of Graff the fashionable tailor, brother of Graff of the Hôtel du Rhin, who found the scantily-paid employment for the pair of prodigals, for the sake of old times, and his apprenticeship at the Hôtel de Hollande. These two incidents—the recognition of a ruined man by a well-to-do friend, and a German innkeeper interesting himself in two penniless fellow-countrymen—give, no doubt, an air of improbability to the story, but truth is so much the more like fiction, since modern writers of fiction have been at such untold pains to imitate truth.

It was not long before Fritz, a clerk with six hundred francs, and Wilhelm, a book-keeper with precisely the same salary, discovered the difficulties of existence in a city so full of temptations. In 1837, the second year of their abode, Wilhelm, who possessed a pretty talent for the flute, entered Pons's orchestra, to earn a little occasional butter to put on his dry bread. As to Fritz, his only way to an increase of income lay through the display of the capacity for business inherited by a descendant of the Virlaz family. Yet, in spite of his assiduity, in spite of abilities which possibly may have stood in his way, his salary only reached the sum of two thousand francs in 1843. Penury, that divine step-

mother, did for the two young men all that their mothers had not been able to do for them; Poverty taught them thrift and worldly wisdom; Poverty gave them her grand rough education, the lessons which she drives with hard knocks into the heads of great men, who seldom know a happy childhood. Fritz and Wilhelm, being but ordinary men, learned as little as they possibly could in her school; they dodged the blows, shrank from her hard breast and bony arms, and never discovered the good fairy lurking within, ready to yield to the caresses of genius. One thing, however, they learned thoroughly—they discovered the value of money, and vowed to clip the wings of riches if ever a second fortune should come to their door.

This was the history which Wilhelm Schwab related in German, at much greater length, to his friend the pianist, ending with:

“Well, Papa Schmucke, the rest is soon explained. Old Brunner is dead. He left four millions! He made an immense amount of money out of Baden railways, though neither his son nor M. Graff, with whom we lodge, had any idea that the old man was one of the original shareholders. I am playing the flute here for the last time this evening; I would have left some days ago, but this was a first performance, and I did not want to spoil my part.”

“Goot, mine friend,” said Schmucke. “But who is die prite?”

“She is Mlle. Graff, the daughter of our host, the landlord of the Hôtel du Rhin. I have loved Mlle. Émilie these seven years; she has read so many immoral novels that she refused all offers for me, without knowing what might come of it. She will be a very wealthy young lady; her uncles, the tailors in the Rue de Richelieu, will leave her all their money. Fritz is giving me the money we squandered at Strasburg five times over! He is putting a million francs in a banking house, M. Graff the tailor is adding another five hundred thousand francs, and Mlle. Émilie’s father not only allows me to incorporate her portion—two hundred and fifty

thousand francs—with the capital, but he himself will be a shareholder with as much again. So the firm of Brunner, Schwab and Company will start with two million five hundred thousand francs. Fritz has just bought fifteen hundred thousand francs' worth of shares in the Bank of France to guarantee our account with them. That is not all Fritz's fortune. He has his father's house property, supposed to be worth another million, and he has let the Grand Hotel de Hollande already to a cousin of the Graffs."

"You look sad ven you look at your friend," remarked Schmucke, who had listened with great interest. "Kann you pe chealous of him?"

"I am jealous for Fritz's happiness," said Wilhelm. "Does that face look as if it belonged to a happy man? I am afraid of Paris; I should like to see him do as I am doing. The old tempter may awake again. Of our two heads, his carries the less ballast. His dress, and the opera-glass, and the rest of it makes me anxious. He keeps looking at the lorettes in the house. Oh! if you only knew how hard it is to marry Fritz. He has a horror of 'going a-courting,' as you say; you would have to give him a drop into a family, just as in England they give a man a drop into the next world."

During the uproar that usually marks the end of a first night, the flute delivered his invitation to the conductor. Pons accepted gleefully; and, for the first time in three months, Schmucke saw a smile on his friend's face. They went back to the Rue de Normandie in perfect silence; that sudden flash of joy had thrown a light on the extent of the disease which was consuming Pons. Oh that a man so truly noble, so disinterested, so great in feeling, should have such a weakness! . . . This was the thought which struck the stoic Schmucke dumb with amazement. He grew wofully sad, for he began to see that there was no help for it; he must even renounce the pleasure of seeing "his goot Bons" opposite him at the dinner-table, for the sake of Pons's welfare; and he did not know whether he could give him up; the mere thought of it drove him distracted.

Meantime, Pons's proud silence and withdrawal to the Mons Aventinus of the Rue de Normandie had, as might be expected, impressed the Présidente, not that she troubled herself much about her parasite, now that she was freed from him. She thought, with her charming daughter, that Cousin Pons had seen through her little "Lili's" joke. But it was otherwise with her husband the President.

Camusot de Marville, a short and stout man, grown solemn since his promotion at the Court, admired Cicero, preferred the Opéra-Comique to the Italiens, compared the actors one with another, and followed the multitude step by step. He used to recite all the articles in the Ministerialist journals, as if he were saying something original, and in giving his opinion at the Council Board he paraphrased the remarks of the previous speaker. His leading characteristics were sufficiently well known; his position compelled him to take everything seriously; and he was particularly tenacious of family ties.

Like most men who are ruled by their wives, the President asserted his independence in trifles, in which his wife was very careful not to thwart him. For a month he was satisfied with the Présidente's commonplace explanations of Pons's disappearance; but at last it struck him as singular that the old musician, a friend of forty years' standing, should first make them so valuable a present as a fan that belonged to Mme. de Pompadour, and then immediately discontinue his visits. Count Popinot had pronounced the trinket a masterpiece; when its owner went to Court, the fan had been passed from hand to hand, and her vanity was not a little gratified by the compliments it received; others had dwelt on the beauties of the ten ivory sticks, each one covered with delicate carving, the like of which had never been seen. A Russian lady (Russian ladies are apt to forget that they are not in Russia) had offered her six thousand francs for the marvel one day at Count Popinot's house, and smiled to see it in such hands. Truth to tell, it was a fan for a Duchess.

"It cannot be denied that poor Cousin Pons understands rubbish of that sort—" said Cécile, the day after the bid.

"Rubbish!" cried her parent. "Why, Government is just about to buy the late M. le Conseiller Dusommerard's collection for three hundred thousand francs; and the State and the Municipality of Paris between them are spending nearly a million francs over the purchase and repair of the Hotel de Cluny to house the 'rubbish,' as you call it.—Such 'rubbish,' dear child," he resumed, "is frequently all that remains of vanished civilizations. An Etruscan jar, and a necklace, which sometimes fetch forty and fifty thousand francs, is 'rubbish' which reveals the perfection of art at the time of the siege of Troy, proving that the Etruscans were Trojan refugees in Italy."

This was the President's cumbrous way of joking; the short, fat man was heavily ironical with his wife and daughter.

"The combination of various kinds of knowledge required to understand such 'rubbish,' Cécile," he resumed, "is a science in itself, called archæology. Archæology comprehends architecture, sculpture, painting, goldsmiths' work, ceramics, cabinet-making (a purely modern art), lace, tapestry—in short, human handiwork of every sort and description."

"Then Cousin Pons is learned?" said Cécile.

"Ah! by the by, why is he never to be seen nowadays?" asked the President. He spoke with the air of a man in whom thousands of forgotten and dormant impressions have suddenly begun to stir, and shaping themselves into one idea, reach consciousness with a ricochet, as sportsmen say.

"He must have taken offence at nothing at all," answered his wife. "I dare say I was not as fully sensible as I might have been of the value of the fan that he gave me. I am ignorant enough, as you know, of—"

"*You!* One of Servin's best pupils, and you don't know Watteau?" cried the President.

"I know Gérard and David and Gros and Girodet, and M. de Forbin and M. Turpin de Crissé—"

"You ought—"

"Ought what, sir?" demanded the lady, gazing at her husband with the air of a Queen of Sheba.

"To know a Watteau when you see it, my dear. Watteau is very much in fashion," answered the President with meekness, that told plainly how much he owed to his wife.

This conversation took place a few days before that night of first performance of "The Devil's Betrothed," when the whole orchestra noticed how ill Pons was looking. But by that time all the circle of dinner-givers who were used to see Pons's face at their tables, and to send him on errands, had begun to ask each other for news of him, and uneasiness increased when it was reported by some who had seen him that he was always in his place at the theatre. Pons had been very careful to avoid his old acquaintances whenever he met them in the streets; but one day it so fell out that he met Count Popinot, the ex-cabinet minister, face to face in a bric-à-brac dealer's shop in the new Boulevard Beaumarchais. The dealer was none other than that Monistrol of whom Pons had spoken to the Présidente, one of the famous and audacious venders whose cunning enthusiasm leads them to set more and more value daily on their wares; for curiosities, they tell you, are growing so scarce that they are hardly to be found at all nowadays.

"Ah, my dear Pons, how comes it that we never see you now? We miss you very much, and Mme. Popinot does not know what to think of your desertion."

"M. le Comte," said the good man, "I was made to feel in the house of a relative that at my age one is not wanted in the world. I have never had much consideration shown me, but at any rate I had not been insulted. I have never asked anything of any man," he broke out with an artist's pride. "I have often made myself useful in return for hospitality. But I have made a mistake, it seems; I am indefinitely beholden to those who honor me by allowing me to sit at table with them; my friends, my relatives. . . . Well and good; I have sent in my resignation as smellfeast. At

home I find daily something which no other house has offered me—a real friend.”

The old artist's power had not failed him; with tone and gesture he put such bitterness into the words that the peer of France was struck by them. He drew Pons aside.

“Come, now, my old friend, what is it? What has hurt you? Could you not tell me in confidence? You will permit me to say that at my house surely you have always met with consideration—”

“You are the one exception,” said the artist. “And besides, you are a great lord and a statesman, you have so many things to think about. That would excuse anything, if there were need for it.”

The diplomatic skill that Popinot had acquired in the management of men and affairs was brought to bear upon Pons, till at length the story of his misfortunes in the President's house was drawn from him.

Popinot took up the victim's cause so warmly that he told the story to Mme. Popinot as soon as he went home, and that excellent and noble-natured woman spoke to the Présidente on the subject at the first opportunity. As Popinot himself likewise said a word or two to the President, there was a general explanation in the family of Camusot de Marville.

Camusot was not exactly master in his own house; but this time his remonstrance was so well founded in law and in fact that his wife and daughter were forced to acknowledge the truth. They both humbled themselves and threw the blame on the servants. The servants, first bidden and then chidden, only obtained pardon by a full confession, which made it clear to the President's mind that Pons had done rightly to stop away. The President displayed himself before the servants in all his masculine and magisterial dignity, after the manner of men who are ruled by their wives. He informed his household that they should be dismissed forthwith, and forfeit any advantages which their long term of service in his house might have brought them, unless from that time forward his cousin and all those who did him the

honor of coming to his house were treated as he himself was. At which speech Madeleine was moved to smile.

"You have only one chance of salvation as it is," continued the President. "Go to my cousin, make your excuses to him, and tell him that you will lose your situations unless he forgives you, for I shall turn you all away if he does not."

Next morning the President went out fairly early to pay a call on his cousin before going down to the court. The apparition of M. le Président de Marville, announced by Mme. Cibot, was an event in the house. Pons, thus honored for the first time in his life, saw reparation ahead.

"At last, my dear cousin," said the President after the ordinary greetings; "at last I have discovered the cause of your retreat. Your behavior increases, if that were possible, my esteem for you. I have but one word to say in that connection. My servants have all been dismissed. My wife and daughter are in despair; they want to see you to have an explanation. In all this, my cousin, there is one innocent person, and he is an old judge; you will not punish me, will you, for the escapade of a thoughtless child who wished to dine with the Popinots? especially when I come to beg for peace, admitting that all the wrong has been on our side? . . . An old friendship of thirty-six years, even suppose that there had been a misunderstanding, has still some claims. Come, sign a treaty of peace by dining with us to-night—"

Pons involved himself in a diffuse reply, and ended by informing his cousin that he was to sign a marriage contract that evening; how that one of the orchestra was not only going to be married, but also about to fling his flute to the winds to become a banker.

"Very well. To-morrow."

"Mme. la Comtesse Popinot has done me the honor of asking me, cousin. She was so kind as to write—"

"The day after to-morrow then."

"M. Brunner, a German, my first flute's future partner,

returns the compliment paid him to-day by the young couple—”

“You are such pleasant company that it is not surprising that people dispute for the honor of seeing you. Very well, next Sunday? Within a week, as we say at the courts?”

“On Sunday we are to dine with M. Graff, the flute’s father-in-law.”

“Very well, on Saturday! Between now and then you will have time to reassure a little girl who has shed tears already over her fault. God asks no more than repentance; you will not be more severe than the Eternal Father with poor little Cécile?—”

Pons, thus reached on his weak side, again plunged into formulas more than polite, and went as far as the stair-head with the President.

An hour later the President’s servants arrived in a troop on poor Pons’s second floor. They behaved after the manner of their kind; they cringed and fawned; they wept. Madeleine took M. Pons aside and flung herself resolutely at his feet.

“It is all my fault; and monsieur knows quite well that I love him,” here she burst into tears. “It was vengeance boiling in my veins; monsieur ought to throw all the blame of the unhappy affair on that. We are all to lose our pensions. . . . Monsieur, I was mad, and I would not have the rest suffer for my fault. . . . I can see now well enough that fate did not make me for monsieur. I have come to my senses, I aimed too high, but I love you still, monsieur. These ten years I have thought of nothing but the happiness of making you happy and looking after things here. What a lot! . . . Oh! if monsieur but knew how much I love him! But monsieur must have seen it through all my mischief-making. If I were to die to-morrow, what would they find?—A will in your favor, monsieur. . . . Yes, monsieur, in my trunk under my best things.”

Madeleine had set a responsive chord vibrating; the passion inspired in another may be unwelcome, but it will al-

ways be gratifying to self-love; this was the case with the old bachelor. After generously pardoning Madeleine, he extended his forgiveness to the other servants, promising to use his influence with his cousin the *Présidente* on their behalf.

It was unspeakably pleasant to Pons to find all his old enjoyments restored to him without any loss of self-respect. The world had come to Pons, he had risen in the esteem of his circle; but Schmucke looked so downcast and dubious when he heard the story of the triumph that Pons felt hurt. When, however, the kind-hearted German saw the sudden change wrought in Pons's face, he ended by rejoicing with his friend, and made a sacrifice of the happiness that he had known during those four months that he had had Pons all to himself. Mental suffering has this immense advantage over physical ills—when the cause is removed it ceases at once. Pons was not like the same man that morning. The old man, depressed and visibly failing, had given place to the serenely contented Pons, who entered the *Présidente's* house that October afternoon with the *Marquise de Pompadour's* fan in his pocket. Schmucke, on the other hand, pondered deeply over this phenomenon, and could not understand it; your true stoic never can understand the courtier that dwells in a Frenchman. Pons was a born Frenchman of the Empire; a mixture of eighteenth century gallantry and that devotion to womankind so often celebrated in songs of the type of "*Partant pour la Syrie*."

So Schmucke was fain to bury his *chagrin* beneath the flowers of his German philosophy; but a week later he grew so yellow that *Mme. Cibot* exerted her ingenuity to call in the parish doctor. The leech had fears of *icterus*, and left *Mme. Cibot* frightened half out of her wits by the Latin word for an attack of the jaundice.

Meantime the two friends went out to dinner together, perhaps for the first time in their lives. For Schmucke it was a return to the Fatherland; for *Johann Graff* of the *Hôtel du Rhin* and his daughter *Émilie*, *Wolfgang Graff* the tailor and his wife, *Fritz Brunner* and *Wilhelm Schwab*,

were Germans, and Pons and the notary were the only Frenchmen present at the banquet. The Graffs of the tailor's business owned a splendid house in the Rue de Richelieu, between the Rue Neuve-des-Petits-Champs, and the Rue Villedo; they had brought up their niece, for Émilie's father, not without reason, had feared contact with the very mixed society of an inn for his daughter. The good tailor Graffs, who loved Émilie as if she had been their own daughter, were giving up the ground floor of their great house to the young couple, and here the bank of Brunner, Schwab and Company was to be established. The arrangements for the marriage had been made about a month ago; some time must elapse before Fritz Brunner, author of all this felicity, could settle his deceased father's affairs, and the famous firm of tailors had taken advantage of the delay to redecorate the first floor and to furnish it very handsomely for the bride and bridegroom. The offices of the bank had been fitted into the wing which united a handsome business house with the old hotel at the back, between courtyard and garden.

On the way from the Rue de Normandie to the Rue de Richelieu, Pons drew from the abstracted Schmucke the details of the story of the modern prodigal son, for whom Death had killed the fatted innkeeper. Pons, but newly reconciled with his nearest relatives, was immediately smitten with a desire to make a match between Fritz Brunner and Cécile de Marville. Chance ordained that the notary was none other than Berthier, old Cardot's son-in-law and successor, the sometime second clerk with whom Pons had been wont to dine.

"Ah! M. Berthier, you herel!" he said, holding out a hand to his host of former days.

"We have not had the pleasure of seeing you at dinner lately; how is it?" returned the notary. "My wife has been anxious about you. We saw you at the first performance of 'The Devil's Betrothed,' and our anxiety became curiosity?"

"Old folk are sensitive," replied the worthy musician; "they make the mistake of being a century behind the times, but how can it be helped? It is quite enough to represent one century—they cannot entirely belong to the century which sees them die."

"Ah!" said the notary, with a shrewd look, "one cannot run two centuries at once."

"By the by," continued Pons, drawing the young lawyer into a corner, "why do you not find some one for my cousin Cécile de Marville—"

"Ah! why—?" answered Berthier. "In this century, when luxury has filtered down to our very porters' lodges, a young fellow hesitates before uniting his lot with the daughter of a President of the Court of Appeal in Paris if she brings him only a hundred thousand francs. In the rank of life in which Mlle. de Marville's husband would take, the wife was never yet known that did not cost her husband three thousand francs a year; the interest on a hundred thousand francs would scarcely find her in pin-money. A bachelor with an income of fifteen or twenty thousand francs can live on an entresol; he is not expected to cut any figure; he need not keep more than one servant, and all his surplus income he can spend on his amusements; he puts himself in the hands of a good tailor, and need not trouble any further about keeping up appearances. Farsighted mothers make much of him; he is one of the kings of fashion in Paris.

"But a wife changes everything. A wife means a properly furnished house," continued the lawyer; "she wants the carriage for herself; if she goes to the play, she wants a box, while the bachelor has only a stall to pay for; in short, a wife represents the whole of the income which the bachelor used to spend on himself. Suppose that husband and wife have thirty thousand francs a year between them—practically, the sometime bachelor is a poor devil who thinks twice before he drives out to Chantilly. Bring children on the scene—he is pinched for money at once.

"Now, as M. and Mme. de Marville are scarcely turned

fifty, Cécile's expectations are bills that will not fall due for fifteen or twenty years to come; and no young fellow cares to keep them so long in his portfolio. The young feather-heads who are dancing the polka with lorettes at the Jardin Mabille are so cankered with self-interest that they don't stand in need of us to explain both sides of the problem to them. Between ourselves, I may say that Mlle. de Marville scarcely sets hearts throbbing so fast but that their owners can perfectly keep their heads, and they are full of these anti-matrimonial reflections. If any eligible young man, in full possession of his senses and an income of twenty thousand francs, happens to be sketching out a programme of a marriage that will satisfy his ambitions, Mlle. de Marville does not altogether answer the description—"

"And why not?" asked the bewildered musician.

"Oh!—" said the notary, "well—a young man nowadays may be as ugly as you and I, my dear Pons, but he is almost sure to have the impertinence to want six hundred thousand francs, a girl of good family, with wit and good looks and good breeding—flawless perfection, in short."

"Then it will not be easy to marry her?"

"She will not be married so long as M. and Mme. de Marville cannot make up their minds to settle Marville on her when she marries; if they had chosen, she might have been the Vicomtesse Popinot by now. But here comes M. Brunner.—We are about to read the deeds of partnership and the marriage contract."

Greetings and introductions over, the relations made Pons promise to sign the contract. He listened to the reading of the documents, and toward half-past five the party went into the dining-room. The dinner was magnificent, as a city merchant's dinner can be, when he allows himself a respite from money-making. Graff of the Hôtel du Rhin was acquainted with the first provision dealers in Paris; never had Pons nor Schmucke fared so sumptuously. The dishes were a rapture to think of! Italian paste, delicate of flavor, unknown to the public; smelts fried as never smelts

were fried before; fish from Lake Lemán, with a real Genevese sauce, and a cream for plum-pudding which would have astonished the London doctor who is said to have invented it. It was nearly ten o'clock before they rose from table. The amount of wine, German and French, consumed at that dinner would amaze the contemporary dandy; nobody knows the amount of liquor that a German can imbibe and yet keep calm and quiet; to have even an idea of the quantity, you must dine in Germany and watch bottle succeed to bottle, like wave rippling after wave along the sunny shores of the Mediterranean, and disappear as if the Teuton possessed the absorbing power of sponges or sea sand. Perfect harmony prevails meanwhile; there is none of the racket that there would be over the liquor in France; the talk is as sober as a money-lender's extempore speech; countenances flush like the faces of the brides in frescoes by Cornelius or Schnorr (imperceptibly, that is to say), and reminiscences are poured out slowly while the smoke puffs from the pipes.

About half-past ten that evening Pons and Schmucke found themselves sitting on a bench out in the garden, with the ex-flute between them; they were explaining their characters, opinions, and misfortunes, with no very clear idea as to why or how they had come to this point. In the thick of a potpourri of confidences, Wilhelm spoke of his strong desire to see Fritz married, expressing himself with vehement and vinous eloquence.

"What do you say to this programme for your friend Brunner?" cried Pons in confidential tones. "A charming and sensible young lady of twenty-four, belonging to a family of the highest distinction. The father holds a very high position as a judge; there will be a hundred thousand francs paid down and a million to come."

"Wait!" answered Schwab; "I will speak to Fritz this instant."

The pair watched Brunner and his friend as they walked round and round the garden; again and again they passed the bench, sometimes one spoke, sometimes the other.

Pons was not exactly intoxicated; his head was a little heavy, but his thoughts, on the contrary, seemed all the lighter; he watched Fritz Brunner's face through the rainbow mist made of fumes of wine, and tried to read auguries favorable to his family. Before very long Schwab introduced his friend and partner to M. Pons; Fritz Brunner expressed his thanks for the trouble which Pons had been so good as to take.

In the conversation which followed, the two old bachelors Schmucke and Pons extolled the estate of matrimony, going so far as to say, without any malicious intent, "that marriage was the end of man." Tea and ices, punch and cakes, were served in the future home of the betrothed couple. The wine had begun to tell upon the honest merchants, and the general hilarity reached its height when it was announced that Schwab's partner thought of following his example.

At two o'clock that morning, Schmucke and Pons walked home along the boulevards, philosophizing *à perte de raison* as they went on the harmony pervading the arrangements of this our world below.

On the morrow of the banquet, Cousin Pons betook himself to his fair cousin the Présidente, overjoyed—poor dear noble soul!—to return good for evil. Surely he had attained to a sublime height, as every one will allow, for we live in an age when the Montyon prize is given to those who do their duty by carrying out the precepts of the Gospel.

"Ah!" said Pons to himself, as he turned the corner of the Rue de Choiseul, "they will lie under immense obligations to their parasite."

Any man less absorbed in his contentment, any man of the world, any distrustful nature would have watched the President's wife and daughter very narrowly on this first return to the house. But the poor musician was a child, he had all the simplicity of an artist, believing in goodness as he believed in beauty; so he was delighted when Cécile and her mother made much of him. After all the vaudevilles, tragedies, and comedies which had been played under the

worthy man's eyes for twelve long years, he could not detect the insincerity and grimaces of social comedy, no doubt because he had seen too much of it. Any one who goes into society in Paris, and knows the type of woman, dried up, body and soul, by a burning thirst for social position, and a fierce desire to be thought virtuous, any one familiar with the sham piety and the domineering character of a woman whose word is law in her own house, may imagine the lurking hatred she bore this husband's cousin whom she had wronged.

All the demonstrative friendliness of mother and daughter was lined with a formidable longing for revenge, evidently postponed. For the first time in Amélie de Marville's life she had been put in the wrong, and that in the sight of the husband over whom she tyrannized; and not only so—she was obliged to be amiable to the author of her defeat! You can scarcely find a match for this position save in the hypocritical dramas which are sometimes kept up for years in the sacred college of cardinals, or in chapters of certain religious orders.

At three o'clock, when the President came back from the law-courts, Pons had scarcely made an end of the marvellous history of his acquaintance, M. Frédéric Brunner. Cécile had gone straight to the point. She wanted to know how Frédéric Brunner was dressed, how he looked, his height and figure, the color of his hair and eyes; and when she had conjectured a distinguished air for Frédéric, she admired his generosity of character.

"Think of his giving five hundred thousand francs to his companion in misfortune! Oh! mamma, I shall have a carriage and a box at the Italiens—" Cécile grew almost pretty as she thought that all her mother's ambitions for her were about to be realized, that the hopes which had almost left her were to come to something after all.

As for the Présidente, all that she said was, "My dear little girl, you may perhaps be married within the fortnight."

All mothers with daughters of three-and-twenty address them as "little girl."

"Still," added the President, "in any case, we must have time to make inquiries; never will I give my daughter to just anybody—"

"As to inquiries," said Pons, "Berthier is drawing up the deeds. As to the young man himself, my dear cousin, you remember what you told me? Well, he is quite forty years old; he is bald. He wishes to find in family life a haven after storm; I did not dissuade him; every man has his tastes—"

"One reason the more for a personal interview," returned the President. "I am not going to give my daughter to a valetudinarian."

"Very good, cousin, you shall see my suitor in five days if you like; for, with your views, a single interview would be enough"—(Cécile and her mother signified their rapture)—"Frédéric is decidedly a distinguished amateur; he begged me to allow him to see my little collection at his leisure. You have never seen my pictures and curiosities; come and see them," he continued, looking at his relatives. "You can come simply as two ladies, brought by my friend Schmucke, and make M. Brunner's acquaintance without betraying yourselves. Frédéric need not in the least know who you are."

"Admirable!" cried the President.

The attention they paid to the once scorned parasite may be left to the imagination! Poor Pons that day became the *Présidente's* cousin. The happy mother drowned her dislike in floods of joy; her looks, her smiles, her words sent the old man into ecstasies over the good that he had done, over the future that he saw by glimpses. Was he not sure to find dinnérs such as yesterday's banquet over the signing of the contract, multiplied indefinitely by three, in the houses of Brunner, Schwab, and Graff? He saw before him a land of plenty—a *vie de cocagne*, a miraculous succession of *plats couverts*, of delicate surprise dishes, of exquisite wines.

"If Cousin Pons brings this through," said the Presi-

dent, addressing his wife after Pons had departed, "we ought to settle an income upon him equal to his salary at the theatre."

"Certainly," said the lady; and Cécile was informed that if the proposed suitor found favor in her eyes, she must undertake to induce the old musician to accept a munificence in such bad taste.

Next day the President went to Berthier. He was anxious to make sure of M. Frédéric Brunner's financial position. Berthier, forewarned by Mme. de Marville, had asked his new client Schwab to come. Schwab the banker was dazzled by the prospect of such a match for his friend (everybody knows how deeply a German venerates social distinctions, so much so that in Germany a wife takes her husband's (official) title, and is the Frau General, the Frau Rath, and so forth)—Schwab therefore was as accommodating as a collector who imagines that he is cheating a dealer.

"In the first place," said Cécile's father, "as I shall make over my estate of Marville to my daughter, I should wish the contract to be drawn up on the dotal system. In that case, M. Brunner would invest a million francs in land to increase the estate, and by settling the land on his wife he would secure her and his children from any share in the liabilities of the bank."

Berthier stroked his chin. "He is coming on well, is M. le Président," thought he.

When the dotal system had been explained to Schwab, he seemed much inclined that way for his friend. He had heard Fritz say that he wished to find some way of insuring himself against another lapse into poverty.

"There is a farm and pasture land worth twelve hundred thousand francs in the market at this moment," remarked the President.

"If we take up shares in the Bank of France to the amount of a million francs, that will be quite enough to guarantee our account," said Schwab. "Fritz does not want to invest more than two million francs in business; he will do as you wish, I am sure, M. le Président."

The President's wife and daughter were almost wild with joy when he brought home this news. Never, surely, did so rich a capture swim so complacently into the nets of matrimony.

"You will be Mme. Brunner de Marville," said the parent, addressing his child; "I will obtain permission for your husband to add the name to his, and afterward he can take out letters of naturalization. If I should be a peer of France some day, he will succeed me!"

The five days were spent by Mme. de Marville in preparations. On the great day she dressed Cécile herself, taking as much pains as the admiral of the British fleet takes over the dressing of the pleasure yacht for Her Majesty of England when she takes a trip to Germany.

Pons and Schwab, on their side, cleaned, swept, and dusted Pons's museum rooms and furniture with the agility of sailors cleaning down a man-of-war. There was not a speck of dust on the carved wood; not an inch of brass but it glistened. The glasses over the pastels obscured nothing of the work of Latour, Greuze, and Liotard (illustrious painter of "The Chocolate Girl"), miracles of an art, alas! so fugitive. The inimitable lustre of Florentine bronze took all the varying hues of the light; the painted glass glowed with color. Every line shone out brilliantly, every object threw in its phrase in a harmony of masterpieces arranged by two musicians—both of whom alike had attained to be poets.

With a tact which avoided the difficulties of a late appearance on the scene of action, the women were the first to arrive; they wished to be upon their own ground. Pons introduced his friend Schmucke, who seemed to his fair visitors to be an idiot; their heads were so full of the eligible gentleman with the four millions of francs that they paid but little attention to the worthy Pons's dissertations upon matters of which they were completely ignorant.

They looked with indifferent eyes at Petitot's enamels, spaced over crimson velvet, set in three frames of marvellous

workmanship. Flowers by Van Huysum, David, and Heim; butterflies painted by Abraham Mignon; Van Eycks, undoubted Cranachs and Albrecht Dürers; the Giorgione, the Sebastian del Piombo; Backhuijzen, Hobbema, Géricault, the rarities of painting—none of these things so much as aroused their curiosity; they were waiting for the sun to arise and shine upon these treasures. Still, they were surprised by the beauty of some of the Etruscan trinkets and the solid value of the snuff-boxes, and out of politeness they went into ecstasies over some Florentine bronzes which they held in their hands when Mme. Cibot announced M. Brunner! They did not turn; they took advantage of a superb Venetian mirror framed in huge masses of carved ebony to scan this phoenix of eligible young men.

Frédéric, forewarned by Wilhelm, had made the most of the little hair that remained to him. He wore a neat pair of trousers, a soft shade of some dark color, a silk waistcoat of superlative elegance and the very newest cut, a shirt with open-work, its linen hand-woven by a Friesland woman, and a blue-and-white cravat. His watch-chain, like the head of his cane, came from Messrs. Florent and Chanor; and the coat, cut by old Graff himself, was of the very finest cloth. The Suède gloves proclaimed the man who had run through his mother's fortune. You could have seen the banker's neat little brougham and pair of horses mirrored in the surface of his speckless varnished boots, even if two pairs of sharp ears had not already caught the sound of the wheels outside in the Rue de Normandie.

When the prodigal of twenty years is a kind of chrysalis from which a banker emerges at the age of forty, the said banker is usually an observer of human nature; and so much the more shrewd if, as in Brunner's case, he understands how to turn his German simplicity to good account. He had assumed for the occasion the abstracted air of a man who is hesitating between family life and the dissipations of bachelorhood. This expression in a Frenchified German seemed to Cécile to be in the highest degree romantic; the descend-

ant of the Virlaz was a second Werther in her eyes—where is the girl who will not allow herself to weave a little novel about her marriage? Cécile thought herself the happiest of women when Brunner, looking round at the magnificent works of art so patiently collected during forty years, waxed enthusiastic, and Pons, to his no small satisfaction, found an appreciative admirer of his treasures for the first time in his life.

“He is poetical,” the young lady said to herself; “he sees millions in the things. A poet is a man that cannot count and leaves his wife to look after his money—an easy man to manage and amuse with trifles.”

Every pane in the two windows was a square of Swiss painted glass; the least of them was worth a thousand francs; and Pons possessed sixteen of these unrivalled works of art for which amateurs seek so eagerly nowadays. In 1815 the panes could be bought for six or ten francs apiece. The value of the glorious collection of pictures, flawless great works, authentic, untouched since they left the master's hands, could only be proved in the fiery furnace of a sale-room. Not a picture but was set in a costly frame; there were frames of every kind—Venetians, carved with heavy ornaments, like English plate of the present day; Romans, distinguishable among the others for a certain dash that artists call *flafla*; Spanish wreaths in bold relief; Flemings and Germans with quaint figures, tortoise-shell frames inlaid with copper and brass and mother-of-pearl and ivory; frames of ebony and boxwood in the styles of Louis Treize, Louis Quatorze, Louis Quinze, and Louis Seize—in short, it was a unique collection of the finest models. Pons, luckier than the art museums of Dresden and Vienna, possessed a frame by the famous Brustoloni—the Michelangelo of wood-carvers.

Mlle. de Marville naturally asked for explanations of each new curiosity, and was initiated into the mysteries of art by Brunner. Her exclamations were so childish, she seemed so pleased to have the value and beauty of the paintings,

carvings, or bronzes pointed out to her, that the German gradually thawed and looked quite young again, and both were led on further than they intended at this (purely accidental) first meeting.

The private view lasted for three hours. Brunner offered his arm when Cécile went downstairs. As they descended slowly and discreetly, Cécile, still talking fine art, wondered that M. Brunner should admire her cousin's gimcracks so much.

"Do you really think that these things that we have just seen are worth a great deal of money?"

"Mademoiselle, if your cousin would sell his collection, I would give eight hundred thousand francs for it this evening, and I should not make a bad bargain. The pictures alone would fetch more than that at a public sale."

"Since you say so, I believe it," returned she; "the things took up so much of your attention that it must be so."

"Oh! mademoiselle!" protested Brunner. "For all answer to your reproach, I will ask your mother's permission to call, so that I may have the pleasure of seeing you again."

"How clever she is, that 'little girl' of mine!" thought the Présidente, following closely upon her daughter's heels. Aloud she said, "With the greatest pleasure, monsieur. I hope that you will come at dinner-time with our Cousin Pons. The President will be delighted to make your acquaintance. —Thank you, cousin."

The lady squeezed Pons's arm with deep meaning; she could not have said more if she had used the consecrated formula, "Let us swear an eternal friendship." The glance which accompanied that "Thank you, cousin," was a caress.

When the young lady had been put into the carriage, and the jobbed brougham had disappeared down the Rue Charlot, Brunner talked bric-à-brac to Pons, and Pons talked marriage.

"Then you see no obstacle?" said Pons.

"Oh!" said Brunner, "she is an insignificant little thing, and the mother is a trifle prim.—We shall see."

"A handsome fortune one of these days. . . . More than a million—"

"Good-by till Monday!" interrupted the millionaire. "If you should care to sell your collection of pictures, I would give you five or six hundred thousand francs—"

"Ah!" said Pons; he had no idea that he was so rich. "But they are my great pleasure in life, and I could not bring myself to part with them. I could only sell my collection to be delivered after my death."

"Very well. We shall see."

"Here we have two affairs afoot!" said Pons; he was thinking only of the marriage.

Brunner shook hands and drove away in his splendid carriage. Pons watched it out of sight. He did not notice that Rémonencq was smoking his pipe in the doorway.

That evening Mme. de Marville went to ask advice of her father-in-law, and found the whole Popinot family at the Camusots' house. It was only natural that a mother who had failed to capture an eldest son should be tempted to take her little revenge; so Mme. de Marville threw out hints of the splendid marriage that her Cécile was about to make.—"Whom can Cécile be going to marry?" was the question upon all lips. And Cécile's mother, without suspecting that she was betraying her secret, let fall words and whispered confidences, afterward supplemented by Mme. Berthier, till gossip circulating in the bourgeois empyrean where Pons accomplished his gastronomical evolutions took something like the following form:

"Cécile de Marville is engaged to be married to a young German, a banker from philanthropic motives, for he has four millions; he is like a hero of a novel, a perfect Werther, charming and kind-hearted. He has sown his wild oats, and he is distractedly in love with Cécile; it is a case of love at first sight; and so much the more certain, since Cécile had

all Pons's paintings of Madonnas for rivals," and so forth and so forth.

Two or three of the set came to call on the *Présidente*, ostensibly to congratulate, but really to find out whether or no the marvellous tale were true. For their benefit *Mme. de Marville* executed the following admirable variations on the theme of son-in-law which mothers may consult, as people used to refer to the "Complete Letter Writer."

"A marriage is not an accomplished fact," she told *Mme. Chiffreville*, "until you have been to the mayor's office and the church. We have only come as far as a personal interview; so I count upon your friendship to say nothing of our hopes."

"You are very fortunate, madame; marriages are so difficult to arrange in these days."

"What can one do? It was chance; but marriages are often made in that way."

"Ah! well. So you are going to marry *Cécile*?" said *Mme. Cardot*.

"Yes," said *Cécile's* mother, fully understanding the meaning of the "so." "We were very particular, or *Cécile* would have been established before this. But now we have found everything that we wish: money, good temper, good character, and good looks; and my sweet little girl certainly deserves nothing less. *M. Brunner* is a charming young man, most distinguished; he is fond of luxury, he knows life; he is wild about *Cécile*, he loves her sincerely; and in spite of his three or four millions, *Cécile* is going to accept him. —We had not looked so high for her; still, store is no sore."

"It was not so much the fortune as the affection inspired by my daughter which decided us," the *Présidente* told *Mme. Lebas*. "*M. Brunner* is in such a hurry that he wants the marriage to take place with the least possible delay."

"Is he a foreigner?"

"Yes, madame; but I am very fortunate, I confess. No, I shall not have a son-in-law in him, but a son. *M. Brunner's* delicacy has quite won our hearts. No one would im-

agine how anxious he was to marry under the dotal system. It is a great security for families. He is going to invest twelve hundred thousand francs in grazing land, which will be added to Marville some day.'

More variations followed on the morrow. For instance—M. Brunner was a great lord, doing everything in lordly fashion; he did not haggle. If M. de Marville could obtain letters of naturalization, qualifying M. Brunner for an office under Government (and the Home Secretary surely could strain a point for M. de Marville), his son-in-law would be a peer of France. Nobody knew how much money M. Brunner possessed; "he had the finest horses and the smartest carriages in Paris!" and so on and so on.

From the pleasure with which the Camusots published their hopes, it was pretty clear that this triumph was unexpected.

Immediately after the interview in Pons's museum, M. de Marville, at his wife's instance, begged the Home Secretary, his chief, and the attorney for the crown to dine with him on the occasion of the introduction of this phoenix of a son-in-law.

The three great personages accepted the invitation, albeit it was given on short notice; they all saw the part that they were to play in the family politics, and readily came to the father's support. In France we are usually pretty ready to assist the mother of marriageable daughters to hook an eligible son-in-law. The Count and Countess Popinot likewise lent their presence to complete the splendor of the occasion, although they thought the invitation in questionable taste.

There were eleven in all. Cécile's grandfather, old Camusot, came, of course, with his wife to a family reunion purposely arranged to elicit a proposal from M. Brunner.

The Camusot de Marvilles had given out that the guest of the evening was one of the richest capitalists in Germany, a man of taste (he was in love with "the little girl"), a future rival of the Nucingens, Kellers, du Tilletts, and their like.

"It is our day," said the Présidente with elaborate simplicity, when she had named her guests one by one for the German whom she already regarded as her son-in-law. "We have only a few intimate friends—first, my husband's father, who, as you know, is sure to be raised to the peerage; M. le Comte and Mme. la Comtesse Popinot, whose son was not thought rich enough for Cécile; the Home Secretary; our First President; our attorney for the crown; our personal friends, in short.—We shall be obliged to dine rather late to-night, because the Chamber is sitting, and people cannot get away before six."

Brunner looked significantly at Pons, and Pons rubbed his hands as if to say, "Our friends, you see! *My* friends!"

Mme. de Marville, as a clever tactician, had something very particular to say to her cousin, that Cécile and her Werther might be left together for a moment. Cécile chattered away volubly, and contrived that Frédéric should catch sight of a German dictionary, a German grammar, and a volume of Goethe hidden away in a place where he was likely to find them.

"Ah! are you learning German?" asked Brunner, flushing red.

(For laying traps of this kind the Frenchwoman has not her match!)

"Oh! how naughty you are!" she cried; "it is too bad of you, monsieur, to explore my hiding-places like this. I want to read Goethe in the original," she added; "I have been learning German for two years."

"Then the grammar must be very difficult to learn, for scarcely ten pages have been cut—" Brunner remarked with much candor.

Cécile, abashed, turned away to hide her blushes. A German cannot resist a display of this kind; Brunner caught Cécile's hand, made her turn, and watched her confusion under his gaze, after the manner of the heroes of the novels of Auguste La Fontaine of chaste memory.

"You are adorable," said he.

Cécile's petulant gesture replied, "So are you—who could help liking you?"

"It is all right, mamma," she whispered to her parent, who came up at that moment with Pons.

The sight of a family party on these occasions is not to be described. Everybody was well satisfied to see a mother put her hand on an eligible son-in-law. Compliments, double-barrelled and double-charged, were paid to Brunner (who pretended to understand nothing); to Cécile, on whom nothing was lost; and to the President, who fished for them. Pons heard the blood singing in his ears, the light of all the blazing gas-jets of the theatre footlights seemed to be dazzling his eyes, when Cécile, in a low voice and with the most ingenious circumspection, spoke of her father's plan of the annuity of twelve hundred francs. The old artist positively declined the offer, bringing forward the value of his fortune in furniture, only now made known to him by Brunner.

The Home Secretary, the First President, the attorney for the crown, the Popinots, and those who had other engagements, all went; and before long no one was left except M. Camusot senior, and Cardot the old notary, and his assistant and son-in-law Berthier. Pons, worthy soul, looking round and seeing no one but the family, blundered out a speech of thanks to the President and his wife for the proposal which Cécile had just made to him. So is it with those who are guided by their feelings; they act upon impulse. Brunner, hearing of an annuity offered in this way, thought that it had very much the look of a commission paid to Pons; he made an Israelite's return upon himself, his attitude told of more than cool calculation.

Meanwhile Pons was saying to his astonished relations, "My collection or its value will, in any case, go to your family, whether I come to terms with our friend Brunner or keep it." The Camusots were amazed to hear that Pons was so rich.

Brunner, watching, saw how all these ignorant people

looked favorably upon a man once believed to be poor so soon as they knew that he had great possessions. He had seen, too, already that Cécile was spoiled by her father and mother; he amused himself, therefore, by astonishing the good bourgeois.

"I was telling mademoiselle," said he, "that M. Pons's pictures were worth that sum to *me*; but the prices of works of art have risen so much of late that no one can tell how much the collection might sell for at a public auction. The sixty pictures might fetch a million francs; several that I saw the other day were worth fifty thousand apiece."

"It is a fine thing to be your heir!" remarked old Cardot, looking at Pons.

"My heir is my cousin Cécile here," answered Pons, insisting on the relationship. There was a flutter of admiration at this.

"She will be a very rich heiress," laughed old Cardot, as he took his departure.

Camusot senior, the President and his wife, Cécile, Brunner, Berthier, and Pons were now left together; for it was assumed that the formal demand for Cécile's hand was about to be made. No sooner was Cardot gone, indeed, than Brunner began with an inquiry which augured well.

"I think I understood," he said, turning to Mme. de Marville, "that mademoiselle is your only daughter."

"Certainly," the lady said proudly.

"Nobody will make any difficulties," Pons, good soul, put in by way of encouraging Brunner to bring out his proposal.

But Brunner grew thoughtful, and an ominous silence brought on a coolness of the strangest kind. The Présidente might have admitted that her "little girl" was subject to epileptic fits. The President, thinking that Cécile ought not to be present, signed to her to go. She went. Still Brunner said nothing. They all began to look at one another. The situation was growing awkward.

Camusot senior, a man of experience, took the German

to Mme. de Marville's room, ostensibly to show him Pons's fan. He saw that some difficulty had arisen, and signed to the rest to leave him alone with Cécile's suitor-designate.

"Here is the masterpiece," said Camusot, opening out the fan.

Brunner took it in his hand and looked at it. "It is worth five thousand francs," he said after a moment.

"Did you not come here, sir, to ask for my granddaughter?" inquired the future peer of France.

"Yes, sir," said Brunner; "and I beg you to believe that no possible marriage could be more flattering to my vanity. I shall never find any one more charming nor more amiable nor a young lady who answers to my ideas like Mlle. Cécile; but—"

"Oh, no *but*s!" old Camusot broke in; "or let us have the translation of your '*but*s' at once, my dear sir."

"I am very glad, sir, that the matter has gone no further on either side," Brunner answered gravely. "I had no idea that Mlle. Cécile was an only daughter. Anybody else would consider this an advantage; but to me, believe me, it is an insurmountable obstacle to—"

"What, sir!" cried Camusot, amazed beyond measure. "Do you find a positive drawback in an immense advantage? Your conduct is really extraordinary; I should very much like to hear the explanation of it."

"I came here this evening, sir," returned the German phlegmatically, "intending to ask M. le Président for his daughter's hand. It was my desire to give Mlle. Cécile a brilliant future by offering her so much of my fortune as she would consent to accept. But an only daughter is a child whose will is law to indulgent parents, who has never been contradicted. I have had the opportunity of observing this in many families, where parents worship divinities of this kind. And your granddaughter is not only the idol of the house, but Mme. la Présidente . . . you know what I mean. I have seen my own father's house turned into a hell, sir, from this very cause. My stepmother, the source of all my

misfortune, an only daughter, idolized by her parents, the most charming betrothed imaginable, after marriage became a fiend incarnate. I do not doubt that Mlle. Cécile is an exception to the rule; but I am not a young man, I am forty years old, and the difference between our ages entails difficulties which would put it out of my power to make the young lady happy, when Mme. la Présidente has always carried out her daughter's every wish and listened to her as if mademoiselle was an oracle. What right have I to expect Mlle. Cécile to change her habits and ideas? Instead of a father and mother who indulge her every whim, she would find an egoistic man of forty; if she should resist, the man of forty would have the worst of it. So, as an honest man—I withdraw. If there should be any need to explain my visit here, I desire to be entirely sacrificed—”

“If these are your motives, sir,” said the future peer of France, “however singular they may be, they are plausible—”

“Do not call my sincerity in question, sir,” Brunner interrupted quickly. “If you know of a penniless girl, one of a large family, well brought up but without fortune, as happens very often in France; and if her character offers me security, I will marry her.”

A pause followed; Frédéric Brunner left Cécile's grandfather and politely took leave of his host and hostess. When he was gone, Cécile appeared, a living commentary upon her Werther's leave-taking; she was ghastly pale. She had hidden herself in her mother's wardrobe and overheard the whole conversation.

“Refused! . . .” she said in a low voice for her mother's ear.

“And why?” asked the Présidente, fixing her eyes upon her embarrassed father-in-law.

“Upon the fine pretext that an only daughter is a spoiled child,” replied that gentleman. “And he is not altogether wrong there,” he added, seizing an opportunity of putting the blame on the daughter-in-law, who had worried him not a little for twenty years.

"It will kill my child!" cried the Présidente, "and it is your doing!" she exclaimed, addressing Pons, as she supported her fainting daughter, for Cécile thought well to make good her mother's words by sinking into her arms. The President and his wife carried Cécile to an easy-chair, where she swooned outright. The grandfather rang for the servants.

"It is a plot of his weaving; I see it all now," said the infuriated mother.

Pons sprang up as if the trump of doom were sounding in his ears.

"Yes!" said the lady, her eyes like two springs of green bile, "this gentleman wished to repay a harmless joke by an insult. Who will believe that that German was right in his mind? He is either an accomplice in a wicked scheme of revenge, or he is crazy. I hope, M. Pons, that in future you will spare us the annoyance of seeing you in the house where you have tried to bring shame and dishonor."

Pons stood like a statue, with his eyes fixed on the pattern of the carpet.

"Well! Are you still here, monster of ingratitude?" cried she, turning round on Pons, who was twirling his thumbs.—"Your master and I are never at home, remember, if this gentleman calls," she continued, turning to the servants.—"Jean, go for the doctor; and bring hartshorn, Madeleine."

In the Présidente's eyes, the reason given by Brunner was simply an excuse, there was something else behind; but, at the same time, the fact that the marriage was broken off was only the more certain. A woman's mind works swiftly in great crises, and Mme. de Marville had hit at once upon the one method of repairing the check. She chose to look upon it as a scheme of revenge. This notion of ascribing a fiendish scheme to Pons satisfied family honor. Faithful to her dislike of the cousin, she treated a feminine suspicion as a fact. Women, generally speaking, hold a creed peculiar to themselves, a code of their own; to them anything

which serves their interests or their passions is true. The *Présidente* went a good deal further. In the course of the evening she talked the President into her belief, and next morning found the magistrate convinced of his cousin's culpability.

Every one, no doubt, will condemn the lady's horrible conduct; but what mother in *Mme. Camusot's* position will not do the same? Put the choice between her own daughter and an alien, she will prefer to sacrifice the honor of the latter. There are many ways of doing this, but the end in view is the same.

The old musician fled down the staircase in haste; but he went slowly along the boulevards to his theatre, he turned in mechanically at the door, and mechanically he took his place and conducted the orchestra. In the interval he gave such random answers to *Schmucke's* questions that his old friend dissembled his fear that *Pons's* mind had given way. To so childlike a nature, the recent scene took the proportions of a catastrophe. He had meant to make every one happy, and he had aroused a terrible slumbering feeling of hate; everything had been turned topsy-turvy. He had at last seen mortal hate in the *Présidente's* eyes, tones, and gesture.

On the morrow, *Mme. Camusot de Marville* made a great resolution; the *Présidente* likewise sanctioned the step now forced upon them by circumstances. It was determined that the estate of *Marville* should be settled upon *Cécile* at the time of her marriage, as well as the house in the *Rue de Hanovre* and a hundred thousand francs. In the course of the morning, the *Présidente* went to call upon the *Comtesse Popinot*; for she saw plainly that nothing but a settled marriage could enable them to recover after such a check. To the *Comtesse Popinot* she told the shocking story of *Pons's* revenge, *Pons's* hideous hoax. It all seemed probable enough when it came out that the marriage had been broken off simply on the pretext that *Cécile* was an only daughter. The *Présidente* next dwelt artfully upon the

advantage of adding "de Marville" to the name of Popinot, and the immense dowry. At the present price fetched by land in Normandy, at two per cent, the property represented nine hundred thousand francs, and the house in the Rue de Hanovre about two hundred and fifty thousand. No reasonable family could refuse such an alliance. The Comte and Comtesse Popinot accepted; and as they were now touched by the honor of the family which they were about to enter, they promised to help to explain away the yesterday evening's mishap.

And now in the house of the elder Camusot, before the very persons who had heard Mme. de Marville singing Frédéric Brunner's praises but a few days ago, that lady, to whom nobody ventured to speak on the topic, plunged courageously into explanations.

"Really, nowadays" (she said), "one could not be too careful if a marriage was in question, especially if one had to do with foreigners."

"And why, madame?"

"What has happened to you?" asked Mme. Chiffreville.

"Do you not know about our adventure with that Brunner, who had the audacity to aspire to marry Cécile? His father was a German that kept a wine-shop, and his uncle is a dealer in rabbit-skins!"

"Is it possible? So clearsighted as you are! . . ." murmured a lady.

"These adventurers are so cunning. But we found out everything through Berthier. His friend is a beggar that plays the flute. He is friendly with a person who lets furnished lodgings in the Rue du Mail and some tailor or other. . . . We found out that he had led a most disreputable life, and no amount of fortune would be enough for a scamp that has run through his mother's property."

"Why, Mlle. de Marville would have been wretched!" said Mme. Berthier.

"How did he come to your house?" asked old Mme. Lebas.

"It was M. Pons. Out of revenge, he introduced this fine gentleman to us, to make us ridiculous. . . . This Brunner (it is the same name as Fontaine in French)—this Brunner, that was made out to be such a grandee, has poor enough health, he is bald, and his teeth are bad. The first sight of him was enough for me; I distrusted him from the first."

"But how about the great fortune that you spoke of?" a young married woman asked shyly.

"The fortune was not nearly so large as they said. These tailors and the landlord and he all scraped the money together among them, and put all their savings into this bank that they are starting. What is a bank for those that begin in these days? Simply a license to ruin themselves. A banker's wife may lie down at night a millionaire and wake up in the morning with nothing but her settlement. At the first word, at the very first sight of him, we made up our minds about this gentleman—he is not one of us. You can tell by his gloves, by his waistcoat, that he is a workingman, the son of a man that kept a pot-house somewhere in Germany; he has not the instincts of a gentleman; he drinks beer, and he smokes—smokes? ah! madame, *twenty-five pipes a day!* . . . What would have become of poor Lili? . . . It makes me shudder even now to think of it. God has indeed preserved us! And besides, Cécile never liked him. . . . Who would have expected such a trick from a relative, an old friend of the house that had dined with us twice a week for twenty years? We have loaded him with benefits, and he played his game so well that he said Cécile was his heir before the Keeper of the Seals and the Attorney-General and the Home Secretary! . . . That Brunner and M. Pons had their story ready, and each of them said that the other was worth millions! . . . No, I do assure you, all of you would have been taken in by an artist's hoax like that."

In a few weeks' time, the united forces of the Camusot and Popinot families gained an easy victory in the world,

for nobody undertook to defend the unfortunate Pons, that parasite, that curmudgeon, that skinflint, that smooth-faced humbug, on whom everybody heaped scorn; he was a viper cherished in the bosom of the family, he had not his match for spite, he was a dangerous mountebank whom nobody ought to mention.

About a month after the perfidious Werther's withdrawal, poor Pons left his bed for the first time after an attack of nervous fever, and walked along the sunny side of the street leaning on Schmucke's arm. Nobody in the Boulevard du Temple laughed at the "pair of nutcrackers," for one of the old men looked so shattered, and the other so touchingly careful of his invalid friend. By the time that they reached the Boulevard Poissonnière, a little color came back to Pons's face; he was breathing the air of the boulevards, he felt the vitalizing power of the atmosphere of the crowded street, the life-giving property of the air that is noticeable in quarters where human life abounds; in the filthy Roman Ghetto, for instance, with its swarming Jewish population, where malaria is unknown. Perhaps, too, the sight of the streets, the great spectacle of Paris, the daily pleasure of his life, did the invalid good. They walked on side by side, though Pons now and again left his friend to look at the shop-windows. Opposite the Théâtre des Variétés he saw Count Popinot, and went up to him very respectfully, for of all men Pons esteemed and venerated the ex-Minister.

The peer of France answered him severely:

"I am at a loss to understand, sir, how you can have no more tact than to speak to a near connection of a family whom you tried to brand with shame and ridicule by a trick which no one but an artist could devise. Understand this, sir, that from to-day we must be complete strangers to each other. Mme. la Comtesse Popinot, like every one else, feels indignant at your behavior to the Marvilles."

And Count Popinot passed on, leaving Pons thunder-struck. Passion, justice, policy, and great social forces never

take into account the condition of the human creature whom they strike down. The statesman, driven by family considerations to crush Pons, did not so much as see the physical weakness of his redoubtable enemy.

"Vat is it, mine boor friend?" exclaimed Schmucke, seeing how white Pons had grown.

"It is a fresh stab in the heart," Pons replied, leaning heavily on Schmucke's arm. "I think that no one, save God in heaven, can have any right to do good, and that is why all those who meddle in His work are so cruelly punished."

The old artist's sarcasm was uttered with a supreme effort; he was trying, excellent creature, to quiet the dismay visible in Schmucke's face.

"So I dink," Schmucke replied simply.

Pons could not understand it. Neither the Camusots nor the Popinots had sent him notice of Cécile's wedding.

On the Boulevard des Italiens Pons saw M. Cardot coming toward them. Warned by Count Popinot's allocution, Pons was very careful not to accost the old acquaintance with whom he had dined once a fortnight for the last year; he lifted his hat, but the other, mayor and deputy of Paris, threw him an indignant glance and went by. Pons turned to Schmucke.

"Do go and ask him what it is that they all have against me," he said to the friend who knew all the details of the catastrophe that Pons could tell him.

"Mennesir," Schmucke began diplomatically, "mine friend Bons is chust recofering from an illness; you haf no doubt fail to rekognize him?"

"Not in the least."

"But mit vat kann you rebroach him?"

"You have a monster of ingratitude for a friend, sir; if he is still alive, it is because nothing kills ill weeds. People do well to mistrust artists; they are as mischievous and spiteful as monkeys. This friend of yours tried to dishonor his own family, and to blight a young girl's character, in revenge

for a harmless joke. I wish to have nothing to do with him; I shall do my best to forget that I have known him, or that such a man exists. All the members of his family and my own share the wish, sir; so do all the persons who once did the said Pons the honor of receiving him."

"Boot, mennesir, you are a reasonaple mann; gif you vill bermit me, I shall exblain die affair—"

"You are quite at liberty to remain his friend, sir, if you are minded that way," returned Cardot, "but you need go no further; for I must give you warning that in my opinion those who try to excuse or defend his conduct are iust as much to blame."

"To chustify it?"

"Yes, for his conduct can neither be justified nor qualified." And with that word, the deputy for the Seine went his way; he would not hear another syllable.

"I have two powers in the State against me," smiled poor Pons, when Schmucke had repeated these savage speeches.

"Eferypody is against us," Schmucke answered dolorously. "Let us go avay pefore we shall meet oder fools."

Never before in the course of a truly ovine life had Schmucke uttered such words as these. Never before had his almost divine meekness been ruffled. He had smiled childlike on all the mischances that befell him, but he could not look and see his sublime Pons maltreated; his Pons, his unknown Aristides, the genius resigned to his lot, the nature that knew no bitterness, the treasury of kindness, the heart of gold! . . . Alceste's indignation filled Schmucke's soul—he was moved to call Pons's amphitryons "fools." For his pacific nature that impulse equalled the wrath of Roland.

With wise foresight, Schmucke turned to go home by the way of the Boulevard du Temple, Pons passively submitting like a fallen fighter, heedless of blows; but chance ordered that he should know that all his world was against him. The House of Peers, the Chamber of Deputies, strangers and the family, the strong, the weak, and the innocent, all combined to send down the avalanche.

In the Boulevard Poissonnière, Pons caught sight of that very M. Cardot's daughter, who, young as she was, had learned to be charitable to others through trouble of her own. Her husband knew a secret by which he kept her in bondage. She was the only one among Pons's hostesses whom he called by her Christian name; he addressed Mme. Berthier as "Félicie," and he thought that she understood him. The gentle creature seemed to be distressed by the sight of Cousin Pons, as he was called (though he was in no way related to the family of the second wife of a cousin by marriage). There was no help for it, however; Félicie Berthier stopped to speak to the invalid.

"I did not think you were cruel, cousin," she said; "but if even a quarter of all that I hear of you is true, you are very false. . . . Oh! do not justify yourself," she added quickly, seeing Pons's significant gesture, "it is useless, for two reasons. In the first place, I have no right to accuse or judge or condemn anybody, for I myself know so well how much may be said for those who seem to be most guilty; secondly, your explanation would do no good. M. Berthier drew up the marriage-contract for Mlle. de Marville and the Vicomte Popinot; he is so exasperated, that if he knew that I had so much as spoken one word to you, one word for the last time, he would scold me. Everybody is against you."

"So it seems indeed, madame," Pons said, his voice shaking as he lifted his hat respectfully.

Painfully he made his way back to the Rue de Normandie. The old German knew from the heavy weight on his arm that his friend was struggling bravely against failing physical strength. That third encounter was like the verdict of the Lamb at the foot of the throne of God; and the anger of the Angel of the Poor, the symbol of the Peoples, is the last word of Heaven. They reached home without another word.

There are moments in our lives when the sense that our friend is near is all that we can bear. Our wounds smart un-

der the consoling words that only reveal the depths of pain. The old pianist, you see, possessed a genius for friendship, the tact of those who, having suffered much, know the customs of suffering.

Pons was never to take a walk again. From one illness he fell into another. He was of a sanguine-bilious temperament, the bile passed into the blood, and a violent liver attack was the result. He had never known a day's illness in his life till a month ago; he had never consulted a doctor; so La Cibot, with almost motherly care and intentions at first of the very best, called in "the doctor of the quarter."

In every quarter of Paris there is a doctor whose name and address are only known to the working classes, to the little tradespeople and the porters, and in consequence he is called "the doctor of the quarter." He undertakes confinement cases, he lets blood, he is in the medical profession pretty much what the "general servant" of the advertising column is in the scale of domestic service. He must perforce be kind to the poor, and tolerably expert by reason of much practice, and he is generally popular. Dr. Poulain, called in by Mme. Cibot, gave an inattentive ear to the old musician's complainings. Pons groaned out that his skin itched; he had scratched himself all night long, till he could scarcely feel. The look of his eyes, with the yellow circles about them, corroborated the symptoms.

"Had you some violent shock a couple of days ago?" the doctor asked the patient.

"Yes, alas!"

"You have the same complaint that this gentleman was threatened with," said Dr. Poulain, looking at Schmucke as he spoke; "it is an attack of jaundice, but you will soon get over it," he added, as he wrote a prescription.

But in spite of that comfortable phrase, the doctor's eyes had told another tale as he looked professionally at the patient; and the death-sentence, though hidden under stereotyped compassion, can always be read by those who wish to know the truth. Mme. Cibot gave a spy's glance at the

doctor, and read his thought; his bedside manner did not deceive her; she followed him out of the room.

"Do you think he will get over it?" asked Mme. Cibot, at the stairhead.

"My dear Mme. Cibot, your lodger is a dead man; not because of the bile in the system, but because his vitality is low. Still, with great care, your patient may pull through. Somebody ought to take him away for a change—"

"How is he to go?" asked Mme. Cibot. "He has nothing to live upon but his salary; his friend has just a little money from some great ladies, very charitable ladies, in return for his services, it seems. They are two children. I have looked after them for nine years."

"I spend my life in watching people die, not of their disease, but of another bad and incurable complaint—the want of money," said the doctor. "How often it happens that, so far from taking a fee, I am obliged to leave a five-franc piece on the mantel-shelf when I go—"

"Poor, dear M. Poulain!" cried Mme. Cibot. "Ah, if you hadn't only the hundred thousand livres a year, what some stingy folk has in the quarter (regular devils from hell they are), you would be like Providence on earth."

Dr. Poulain had made the little practice, by which he made a bare subsistence, chiefly by winning the esteem of the porters' lodges in his district. So he raised his eyes to heaven and thanked Mme. Cibot with a solemn face worthy of Tartuffe.

"Then you think that with careful nursing our dear patient will get better, my dear M. Poulain?"

"Yes, if this shock has not been too much for him."

"Poor man! who can have vexed him? There isn't nobody like him on earth, except his friend M. Schmucke. I will find out what is the matter, and I will undertake to give them that upset my gentleman a hauling over the coals—"

"Look here, my dear Mme. Cibot," said the doctor as they stood in the gateway, "one of the principal symptoms of his complaint is great irritability; and as it is hardly to

be supposed that he can afford a nurse, the task of nursing him will fall to you. So—"

"Are you talking of Mouchieur Ponsh?" asked the marine store-dealer. He was sitting smoking on the curb-post in the gateway, and now he rose to join in the conversation.

"Yes, Daddy Rémonencq."

"All right," said Rémonencq, "ash to moneysh, he ish better off than Mouchieur Monishtrol and the big men in the curiosity line. I know enough in the art line to tell you thish—the dear man hash treasursh!" he spoke with a broad Auvergne dialect.

"Look here, I thought you were laughing at me the other day when my gentlemen were out and I showed you the old rubbish upstairs," said Mme. Cibot.

In Paris, where walls have ears, where doors have tongues, and window bars have eyes, there are few things more dangerous than the practice of standing to chat in a gateway. Partings are like postscripts to a letter—indiscreet utterances that do as much mischief to the speaker as to those who overhear them. A single instance will be sufficient as a parallel to an event in this history.

In the time of the Empire when men paid considerable attention to their hair, one of the first coiffeurs of the day came out of a house where he had just been dressing a pretty woman's head. This artist in question enjoyed the custom of all the lower-floor inmates of the house; and among these there flourished an elderly bachelor guarded by a house-keeper who detested her master's next-of-kin. The *ci-devant* young man, falling seriously ill, the most famous doctors of the day (they were not as yet styled the "princes of science") had been called in to consult upon his case; and it so chanced that the learned gentlemen were taking leave of one another in the gateway just as the hairdresser came out. They were talking as doctors usually talk among themselves when the farce of a consultation is over. "He is a dead man," quoth Dr. Haudry.—"He has not a month to live,"

added Desplein, "unless a miracle takes place."—These were the words overheard by the hairdresser.

Like all hairdressers, he kept up a good understanding with his customers' servants. Prodigious greed sent the man upstairs again; he mounted to the *ci-devant* young man's apartment, and promised the servant-mistress a tolerably handsome commission to persuade her master to sink a large proportion of his money in an annuity. The dying bachelor, fifty-six by count of years, and twice as old as his age by reason of amorous campaigns, owned, among other property, a splendid house in the Rue de Richelieu, worth at that time about two hundred and fifty thousand francs. It was this house that the hairdresser coveted; and on agreement to pay an annuity of thirty thousand francs so long as the bachelor lived it passed into his hands. This happened in 1806. And in this present year 1846, the hairdresser is still paying that annuity. He has retired from business, he is seventy years old; the *ci-devant* young man is in his dotage; and as he has married his Mme. Evrard, he may last for a long while yet. As the hairdresser gave the woman thirty thousand francs, his bit of real estate has cost him, first and last, more than a million, and the house at this day is worth eight or nine hundred thousand francs.

Like the hairdresser, Rémonencq the Auvergnat had overheard Brunner's parting remark in the gateway on the day of Cécile's first interview with that phoenix of eligible men. Rémonencq at once longed to gain a sight of Pons's museum; and as he lived on good terms with his neighbors the Cibots, it was not very long before the opportunity came one day when the friends were out. The sight of such treasures dazzled him; he saw a "good haul," in dealers' phrase, which being interpreted means a chance to steal a fortune. He had been meditating this for five or six days.

"I am sho far from joking," he said, in reply to Mme. Cibot's remark, "that we will talk the thing over; and if the good shentleman will take an annuity of fifty thoushand franchsh, I will shtand a hamper of wine, if—"

"Fifty thousand francs!" interrupted the doctor; "what are you thinking about? Why, if the good man is so well off as that, with me in attendance, and Mme. Cibot to nurse him, he may get better—for liver complaint is a disease that attacks strong constitutions."

"Fifty, did I shay? Why, a shentleman here, on your very doorshtep, offered him sheven hundred thoushand francsh, shimply for the pictursh, *fouchtra!*"

While Rémonencq made this announcement, Mme. Cibot was looking at Dr. Poulain. There was a strange expression in her eyes; the devil might have kindled that sinister glitter in their tawny depths.

"Oh, come! we must not pay any attention to such idle tales," said the doctor, well pleased, however, to find that his patient could afford to pay for his visits.

"If my dear Mme. Chibot, here, would let me come and bring an ekshpert (shinsh the shentleman upshtairs ish in bed), I will shertainly find the money in a couple of hoursh, even if sheven hundred thoushand francsh ish in qesh-tion—"

"All right, my friend," said the doctor. "Now, Mme. Cibot, be careful never to contradiet the invalid. You must be prepared to be very patient with him, for he will find everything irritating and wearisome, even your services; nothing will please him; you must expect grumbling—"

"He will be uncommonly hard to please," said La Cibot.

"Look here, mind what I tell you," the doctor said in a tone of authority, "M. Pons's life is in the hands of those that nurse him; I shall come perhaps twice a day. I shall take him first on my round."

The doctor's profound indifference to the fate of a poor patient had suddenly given place to a most tender solicitude when he saw that the speculator was serious, and that there was a possible fortune in question.

"He will be nursed like a king," said Madame Cibot, forcing up enthusiasm. She waited till the doctor turned the corner into the Rue Charlot; then she fell to talking

again with the dealer in old iron. Rémonencq had finished smoking his pipe, and stood in the doorway of his shop, leaning against the frame; he had purposely taken this position; he meant the portress to come to him.

The shop had once been a café. Nothing had been changed there since the Auvergnat discovered it and took over the lease; you could still read "Café de Normandie" on the strip left above the windows in all modern shops. Rémonencq had found somebody, probably a house painter's apprentice, who did the work for nothing, to paint another inscription in the remaining space below—"RÉMONENCQ," it ran, "DEALER IN MARINE STORES, FURNITURE BOUGHT"—painted in small black letters. All the mirrors, tables, seats, shelves, and fittings of the Café de Normandie had been sold, as might have been expected, before Rémonencq took possession of the shop as it stood, paying a yearly rent of six hundred francs for the place, with a back shop, a kitchen, and a single room above, where the head waiter used to sleep, for the house belonging to the Café de Normandie was let separately. Of the former splendor of the café, nothing now remained save the plain light green paper on the walls, and the strong iron bolts and bars of the shop-front.

When Rémonencq came hither in 1831, after the Revolution of July, he began by displaying a selection of broken door-bells, cracked plates, old iron, and the obsolete scales and weights abolished by a Government which alone fails to carry out its own regulations, for pence and halfpence of the time of Louis XVI. are still in circulation. After a time this Auvergnat, a match for five ordinary Auvergnats, bought up old saucepans and kettles, old picture-frames, old copper, and chipped china. Gradually, as the shop was emptied and filled, the quality of the stock-in-trade improved, like Nicolet's farces. Rémonencq persisted in an unfailling and prodigiously profitable martingale, a "system" which any philosophical idler may study as he watches the increasing value of the stock kept by this intelligent class of trader. Picture-

frames and copper succeed to tinware, argand lamps, and damaged crockery; china marks the next transition; and after no long tarriance in the "omnium gatherum" stage, the shop becomes a museum. Some day or other the dusty windows are cleaned, the interior is restored, the Auvergnat relinquishes velvet and jackets for a greatcoat, and there he sits like a dragon guarding his treasure, surrounded by masterpieces! He is a cunning connoisseur by this time; he has increased his capital tenfold; he is not to be cheated; he knows the tricks of the trade. The monster among his treasures looks like some old hag among a score of young girls that she offers to the public. Beauty and miracles of art are alike indifferent to him; subtle and dense as he is, he has a keen eye to profits, he talks roughly to those who know less than he does; he has learned to act a part, he pretends to love his pictures and his marquetry, or he tells you that he is short of money, or again he lets you know the price he himself gave for the things, he offers to let you see the memoranda of the sale. He is a Proteus; in one hour he can be Jocrisse, Janot, *Queue-rouge*, Mondor, Harpagon, or Nicodème.

The third year found armor, and old pictures, and some tolerably fine clocks in Rémonencq's shop. He sent for his sister, and La Rémonencq came on foot all the way from Auvergne to take charge of the shop while her brother was away. A big and very ugly woman, dressed like a Japanese idol, a half-idiotic creature with a vague, staring gaze, she would not bate a centime of the prices fixed by her brother. In the intervals of business she did the work of the house, and solved the apparently insoluble problem—how to live on "the mists of the Seine." The Rémonencqs' diet consisted of bread and herrings, with the outside leaves of lettuce or vegetable refuse selected from the heaps deposited in the kennel before the doors of eating-houses. The two between them did not spend more than fivepence a day on food (bread included), and La Rémonencq earned the money by sewing or spinning.

Rémonencq came to Paris, in the first instance, to work as an errand-boy. Between the years 1825 and 1831 he ran errands for dealers in curiosities in the Boulevard Beaumarchais or coppersmiths in the Rue de Lappe. It is the usual start in life in his line of business. Jews, Normans, Auvergnats, and Savoyards, those four different races of men all have the same instincts, and make their fortunes in the same way; they spend nothing, make small profits, and let them accumulate at compound interest. Such is their trading charter, and *that* charter is no delusion.

Rémonencq at this moment had made it up with his old master Monistrol; he did business with wholesale dealers, he was a *chineur* (the technical word), plying his trade in the *banlieue*, which, as everybody knows, extends for some forty leagues round Paris.

After fourteen years of business, he had sixty thousand francs in hand and a well-stocked shop. He lived in the Rue de Normandie because the rent was low, but casual customers were scarce, most of his goods were sold to other dealers, and he was content with moderate gains. All his business transactions were carried on in the Auvergne dialect or *charabia*, as people call it.

Rémonencq cherished a dream! He wished to establish himself on a boulevard, to be a rich dealer in curiosities, and do a direct trade with amateurs some day. And, indeed, within him there was a formidable man of business. His countenance was the more inscrutable because it was glazed over by a deposit of dust and particles of metal glued together by the sweat of his brow; for he did everything himself, and the use and wont of bodily labor had given him something of the stoical impassibility of the old soldiers of 1799.

In personal appearance Rémonencq was short and thin; his little eyes were set in his head in porcine fashion; a Jew's slyness and concentrated greed looked out of those dull blue circles, though in his case the false humility that masks the Hebrew's unfathomed contempt for the Gentile was lacking.

The relations between the Cibots and the Rémonencqs were those of benefactors and recipients. Mme. Cibot, convinced that the Auvergnats were wretchedly poor, used to let them have the remainder of "her gentlemen's" dinners at ridiculous prices. The Rémonencqs would buy a pound of broken bread, crusts and crumbs, for a farthing, a porringer full of cold potatoes for something less, and other scraps in proportion. Rémonencq shrewdly allowed them to believe that he was not in business on his own account, he worked for Monistrol, the rich shopkeepers preyed upon him, he said, and the Cibots felt sincerely sorry for Rémonencq. The velveteen jacket, waistcoat, and trousers, particularly affected by Auvergnats, were covered with patches of Cibot's making, and not a penny had the little tailor charged for repairs which kept the three garments together after eleven years of wear.

Thus we see that all Jews are not in Israel.

"You are not laughing at me, Rémonencq, are you?" asked the portress. "Is it possible that M. Pons has such a fortune, living as he does? There is not a hundred francs in the place—"

"Amateursh are all like that," Rémonencq remarked sententiously.

"Then do you think that my gentleman has the worth of seven hundred thousand francs, eh?—"

"In pictures alone," continued Rémonencq (it is needless, for the sake of clearness in the story, to give any further specimens of his frightful dialect). "If he would take fifty thousand francs for one up there that I know of, I would find the money if I had to hang myself. Do you remember those little frames full of enamelled copper on crimson velvet, hanging among the portraits? . . . Well, those are Petitot's enamels; and there is a cabinet minister as used to be a druggist that will give three thousand francs apiece for them."

La Cibot's eyes opened wide. "There are thirty of them in the pair of frames!" she said.

"Very well, you can judge for yourself how much he is worth."

Mme. Cibot's head was swimming; she wheeled round. In a moment came the thought that she would have a legacy, *she* would sleep sound on old Pons's will, like the other servant-mistresses whose annuities had aroused such envy in the Marais. Her thoughts flew to some commune in the neighborhood of Paris; she saw herself strutting proudly about her house in the country, looking after her garden and poultry yard, ending her days, served like a queen, along with her poor dear Cibot, who deserved such good fortune, like all angelic creatures whom nobody knows nor appreciates.

Her abrupt, unthinking movement told Rémonencq that success was sure. In the *chineur's* way of business—the *chineur*, be it explained, goes about the country picking up bargains at the expense of the ignorant—in the *chineur's* way of business, the one real difficulty is the problem of gaining an entrance to a house. No one can imagine the Scapin's roguery, the tricks of a Sganarelle, the wiles of a Dorine by which the *chineur* contrives to make a footing for himself. These comedies are as good as a play, and founded indeed on the old stock theme of the dishonesty of servants. For thirty francs in money or goods, servants, and especially country servants, will sometimes conclude a bargain on which the *chineur* makes a profit of a thousand or two thousand francs. If we could but know the history of such and such a service of Sèvres porcelain, *pâte tendre*, we should find that all the intellect, all the diplomatic subtlety displayed at Münster, Nimeguen, Utrecht, Ryswick, and Vienna was surpassed by the *chineur*. His is the more frank comedy; his methods of action fathom depths of personal interest quite as profound as any that plenipotentiaries can explore in their difficult search for any means of breaking up the best cemented alliances.

"I have set La Cibot nicely on fire," Rémonencq told his sister, when she came to take up her position again on

the ramshackle chair. "And now," he continued, "I shall go to consult the only man that knows, our Jew, a good sort of Jew that did not ask more than fifteen per cent of us for his money."

Rémonencq had read La Cibot's heart. To will is to act with women of her stamp. Let them see the end in view; they will stick at nothing to gain it, and pass from scrupulous honesty to the last degree of scoundrelism in the twinkling of an eye. Honesty, like most dispositions of mind, is divided into two classes—negative and positive. La Cibot's honesty was of the negative order; she and her like are honest until they see their way clear to gain money belonging to somebody else. Positive honesty, the honesty of the bank collector, can wade knee-deep through temptations.

A torrent of evil thoughts invaded La Cibot's heart and brain so soon as Rémonencq's diabolical suggestion opened the floodgates of self-interest. La Cibot climbed, or, to be more accurate, fled up the stairs, opened the door on the landing, and showed a face disguised in false solicitude in the doorway of the room where Pons and Schmucke were bemoaning themselves. As soon as she came in, Schmucke made her a warning sign; for, true friend and sublime German that he was, he too had read the doctor's eyes, and he was afraid that Mme. Cibot might repeat the verdict. Mme. Cibot answered by a shake of the head indicative of deep woe.

"Well, my dear monsieur," asked she, "how are you feeling?" She sat down on the foot of the bed, hands on hips, and fixed her eyes lovingly upon the patient; but what a glitter of metal there was in them, a terrible, tigerlike gleam if any one had watched her.

"I feel very ill," answered poor Pons. "I have not the slightest appetite left.—Oh! the world, the world!" he groaned, squeezing Schmucke's hand. Schmucke was sitting by his bedside, and doubtless the sick man was talking of the causes of his illness.—"I should have done far better to follow your advice, my good Schmucke, and dined here

every day, and given up going into this society, that has fallen on me with all its weight, like a tumbrel cart crushing an egg! And why?"

"Come, come, don't complain, M. Pons," said La Cibot; "the doctor told me just how it is—"

Schmucke tugged at her gown.—"And you will pull through," she continued, "only we must take great care of you. Be easy, you have a good friend beside you, and without boasting, a woman as will nurse you like a mother nurses her first child. I nursed Cibot round once when Dr. Poulain had given him over; he had the shroud up to his eyes, as the saying is, and they gave him up for dead. Well, well, you have not come to that yet, God be thanked, ill though you may be. Count on me; I would pull you through all by myself, I would! Keep still, don't you fidget like that."

She pulled the coverlet over the patient's hands as she spoke.

"There, sonny! M. Schmucke and I will sit up with you of nights. A prince won't be no better nursed . . . and besides, you needn't refuse yourself nothing that's necessary, you can afford it.—I have just been talking things over with Cibot, for what would he do without me, poor dear?—Well, and I talked him round; we are both so fond of you that he will let me stop up with you of a night. And that is a good deal to ask of a man like him, for he is as fond of me as ever he was the day we were married. I don't know how it is. It is the lodge, you see; we are always there together! Don't you throw off the things like that!" she cried, making a dash for the bedhead to draw the coverlet over Pons's chest. "If you are not good, and don't do just as Dr. Poulain says—and Dr. Poulain is the image of Providence on earth—I will have no more to do with you. You must do as I tell you—"

"Yes, Montame Zipod, he vill do vat you tell him," put in Schmucke; "he wants to lif for his boor friend Schmucke's sake, I'll pe pound."

"And of all things, don't fidget yourself," continued La Cibot, "for your illness makes you quite bad enough without your making it worse for want of patience. God sends us our troubles, my dear good gentleman; He punishes us for our sins. Haven't you nothing to reproach yourself with? some poor little bit of a fault or other?"

The invalid shook his head.

"Oh! go on! You were young once, you had your fling, there is some love-child of yours somewhere—cold, and starving, and homeless. . . . What monsters men are! Their love doesn't last only for a day, and then in a jiffy they forget, they don't so much as think of the child at the breast for months. . . . Poor women!"

"But no one has ever loved me except Schmucke and my mother," poor Pons broke in sadly.

"Oh! come, you aren't no saint! You were young in your time, and a fine-looking young fellow you must have been at twenty. I should have fallen in love with you myself, so nice as you are—"

"I always was as ugly as a toad," Pons put in desperately.

"You say that because you are modest; nobody can't say that you aren't modest."

"My dear Mme. Cibot, *no*, I tell you. I always was ugly, and I never was loved in my life."

"You, indeed!" cried the portress. "You want to make me believe at this time of day that you are as innocent as a young maid at your time of life. Tell that to your granny! A musician at a theatre too! Why, if a woman told me that, I wouldn't believe her."

"Montame Zipod, you irritate him!" cried Schmucke, seeing that Pons was writhing under the bedclothes.

"You hold your tongue too! You are a pair of old libertines. If you were ugly, it don't make no difference; there was never so ugly a saucepan-lid but it found a pot to match, as the saying is. There is Cibot, he got one of the handsomest oyster-women in Paris to fall in love with him, and you are infinitely better looking than him! You are a nice

pair, you are! Come, now, you have sown your wild oats, and God will punish you for deserting your children, like Abraham—”

Exhausted though he was, the invalid gathered up all his strength to make a vehement gesture of denial.

“Do lie quiet; if you have, it won’t prevent you from living as long as Methuselah.”

“Then, pray let me be quiet!” groaned Pons. “I have never known what it is to be loved. I have had no child; I am alone in the earth.”

“Really, eh?” returned the portress. “You are so kind, and that is what women like, you see—it draws them—and it looked to me impossible that when you were in your prime—”

“Take her away,” Pons whispered to Schmucke; “she sets my nerves on edge.”

“Then there’s M. Schmucke, he has children. You old bachelors are not all like that—”

“I!” cried Schmucke, springing to his feet, “vy!—”

“Come, then, you have none to come after you either, eh? You both sprung up out of the earth like mushrooms—”

“Look here, komm mit me,” said Schmucke. The good German manfully took Mme. Cibot by the waist and carried her off into the next room, in spite of her exclamations.

“At your age, you would not take advantage of a defenceless woman!” cried La Cibot, struggling in his arms.

“Don’t make a noise!”

“You, too, the better one of the two!” returned La Cibot. “Ah! it is my fault for talking about love to two old men who have never had nothing to do with women. I have roused your passions,” cried she, as Schmucke’s eyes glittered with wrath. “Help! help! police!”

“You are a stoopid!” said the German. “Look here, vat tid de toctor say?”

“You are a ruffian to treat me so,” wept La Cibot, now released—“me, that would go through fire and water for you both! Ah! well, well, they say that that is the way

with men—and true it is! There is my poor Cibot, *he* would not be rough with me like this. . . . And I treated you like my children, for I have none of my own; and yesterday, yes, only yesterday I said to Cibot, ‘God knew well what He was doing, dear,’ I said, ‘when He refused us children, for I have two children there upstairs.’ By the holy crucifix and the soul of my mother, that was what I said to him—”

“Eh! but vat did der doctor say?” Schmucke demanded furiously, stamping on the floor for the first time in his life.

“Well,” said Mme. Cibot, drawing Schmucke into the dining-room, “he just said this—that our dear, darling love lying ill there would die if he wasn’t carefully nursed; but I am here, in spite of all your brutality, for brutal you were, you that I thought so gentle. And you are one of that sort! Ah, now, you would not abuse a woman at your age, great blackguard—”

“Placard? I? Vill you not oonderstand that I lof no-pody but Bons?”

“Well and good, you will let me alone, won’t you?” said she, smiling at Schmucke. “You had better; for if Cibot knew that anybody had attempted his honor he would break every bone in his skin.”

“Take crate care of him, dear Montame Zipod,” answered Schmucke, and he tried to take the portress’s hand.

“Oh! look here now, *again*.”

“Chust listen to me. You shall haf all dot I haf, gif ve safe him.”

“Very well; I will go round to the chemist’s to get the things that are wanted; this illness is going to cost a lot, you see, sir, and what will you do?”

“I shall vork; Bons shall be nursed like ein brince.”

“So he shall, M. Schmucke; and look here, don’t you trouble about nothing. Cibot and I, between us, have saved a couple of thousand francs; they are yours; I have been spending money on you this long time, I have.”

“Goot voman!” cried Schmucke, brushing the tears from his eyes. “Vat ein heart!”

"Wipe your tears; they do me honor; this is my reward," said La Cibot melodramatically. "There isn't no more disinterested creature on earth than me; but don't you go into the room with tears in your eyes, or M. Pons will be thinking himself worse than he is."

Schmucke was touched by this delicate feeling. He took La Cibot's hand and gave it a final squeeze.

"Spare me!" cried the ex-oysterseller, leering at Schmucke.

"Bons," the good German said when he returned, "Montame Zipod is an anchel; 'tis an anchel dat brattles, but an anchel all der same."

"Do you think so? I have grown suspicious in the past month," said the invalid, shaking his head. "After all I have been through, one comes to believe in nothing but God and my friend—"

"Get bedder, and ve vill lif like kings all tree of us," exclaimed Schmucke.

"Cibot!" panted the portress as she entered the lodge. "Oh, my dear, our fortune is made. My two gentlemen haven't nobody to come after them, no natural children, no nothing, in short! Oh, I shall go round to Ma'am Fontaine's and get her to tell me my fortune on the cards, then we shall know how much we are going to have—"

"Wife," said the little tailor, "it's ill counting on dead men's shoes."

"Oh, I say, are *you* going to worry me?" asked she, giving her spouse a playful tap. "I know what I know! Dr. Poulain has given up M. Pons. And we are going to be rich! My name will be down in the will. . . . I'll see to that. Draw your needle in and out, and look after the lodge; you will not do it for long now. We will retire, and go into the country, out at Batignolles. A nice house and a fine garden; you will amuse yourself with gardening, and I shall keep a servant!"

"Well, neighbor, and how are things going on upstairs?"

The words were spoken with the thick Auvergnat accent, and Rémonencq put his head in at the door. "Do you know what the collection is worth?"

"No, no, not yet. One can't go at that rate, my good man. I have begun, myself, by finding out more important things—"

"More important!" exclaimed Rémonencq; "why, what things can be more important?"

"Come, let me do the steering, ragamuffin," said La Cibot authoritatively.

"But thirty per cent on seven hundred thousand francs," persisted the dealer in old iron; "you could be your own mistress for the rest of your days on that."

"Be easy, Daddy Rémonencq; when we want to know the value of the things that the old man has got together, then we will see."

La Cibot went for the medicine ordered by Dr. Poulain, and put off her consultation with Mme. Fontaine until the morrow; the oracle's faculties would be fresher and clearer in the morning, she thought; and she would go early, before everybody else came, for there was often a crowd at Mme. Fontaine's.

Mme. Fontaine was at this time the oracle of the Marais; she had survived the rival of forty years, the celebrated Mlle. Lenormand. No one imagines the part that fortune-tellers play among Parisians of the lower classes, nor the immense influence which they exert over the uneducated; general servants, portresses, kept women, workmen, all the many in Paris who live on hope, consult the privileged beings who possess the mysterious power of reading the future.

The belief in occult science is far more widely spread than scholars, lawyers, doctors, magistrates, and philosophers imagine. The instincts of the people are ineradicable. One among those instincts, so foolishly styled "superstition," runs in the blood of the populace, and tinges no less the intellects of better educated folk. More than one French statesman has been known to consult the fortune-teller's

cards. For sceptical minds, astrology, in French, so oddly termed *astrologie judiciaire*, is nothing more than a cunning device for making a profit out of one of the strongest of all the instincts of human nature—to wit, curiosity. The sceptical mind consequently denies that there is any connection between human destiny and the prognostications obtained by the seven or eight principal methods known to astrology; and the occult sciences, like many natural phenomena, are passed over by the freethinker or the materialist philosopher, *id est*, by those who believe in nothing but visible and tangible facts, in the results given by the chemist's retort and the scales of modern physical science. The occult sciences still exist; they are at work, but they make no progress, for the greatest intellects of two centuries have abandoned the field.

If you only look at the practical side of divination, it seems absurd to imagine that events in a man's past life and secrets known only to himself can be represented on the spur of the moment by a pack of cards which he shuffles and cuts for the fortune-teller to lay out in piles according to certain mysterious rules; but then the steam-engine was condemned as absurd, aerial navigation is still said to be absurd, so in their time were the inventions of gunpowder, printing, spectacles, engraving, and that latest great discovery of all—the daguerreotype. If any man had come to Napoleon to tell him that a building or a figure is at all times and in all places represented by an image in the atmosphere, that every existing object has a spectral intangible double which may become visible, the Emperor would have sent his informant to Charenton for a lunatic, just as Richelieu before his day sent that Norman martyr, Salomon de Caux, to the Bicêtre for announcing his immense triumph, the idea of navigation by steam. Yet Daguerre's discovery amounts to nothing more nor less than this.

And if for some clairvoyant eyes God has written each man's destiny over his whole outward and visible form, if a man's body is the record of his fate, why should not the

hand in a manner epitomize the body? Since the hand represents the deed of man, and by his deeds he is known.

Herein lies the theory of palmistry. Does not Society imitate God? At the sight of a soldier we can predict that he will fight; of a lawyer, that he will talk; of a shoemaker, that he shall make shoes or boots; of a worker of the soil, that he shall dig the ground and dung it; and is it a more wonderful thing that such a one with the "seer's" gift should foretell the events of a man's life from his hand?

To take a striking example. Genius is so visible in a man that a great artist cannot walk about the streets of Paris but the most ignorant people are conscious of his passing. He is a sun, as it were, in the mental world, shedding light that colors everything in his path. And who does not know an idiot at once by an impression the exact opposite of the sensation of the presence of genius. Most observers of human nature in general, and Parisian nature in particular, can guess the profession or calling of the man in the street.

The mysteries of the witches' Sabbath, so wonderfully painted in the sixteenth century, are no mysteries for us. The Egyptian ancestors of that mysterious people of Indian origin, the gypsies of the present day, simply used to drug their clients with hashish, a practice that fully accounts for broomstick rides and flights up the chimney, the real-seeming visions, so to speak, of old crones transformed into young damsels, the frantic dances, the exquisite music, and all the fantastic tales of devil-worship.

So many proven facts have been first discovered by occult science that some day we shall have professors of occult science, as we already have professors of chemistry and astronomy. It is even singular that here in Paris, where we are founding chairs of Mantchu and Slav and literatures so little professable (to coin a word) as the literatures of the North (which so far from providing lessons stand very badly in need of them); when the curriculum is full of the everlasting lectures on Shakespeare and the

sixteenth century—it is strange that some one has not restored the teaching of the occult philosophies, once the glory of the University of Paris, under the title of anthropology. Germany, so childlike and so great, has outstripped France in this particular; in Germany they have professors of a science of far more use than a knowledge of the heterogeneous philosophies, which all come to the same thing at bottom.

Once admit that certain beings have the power of discerning the future in its germ-form of the Cause, as the great inventor sees a glimpse of the industry latent in his invention, or a science in something that happens every day unnoticed by ordinary eyes—once allow this, and there is nothing to cause an outcry in such phenomena, no violent exception to Nature's laws, but the operation of a recognized faculty; possibly a kind of mental somnambulism, as it were. If, therefore, the hypothesis upon which the various ways of divining the future are based seems absurd, the facts remain. Remark that it is not really more wonderful that the seer should foretell the chief events of the future than that he should read the past. Past and future, on the sceptic's system, equally lie beyond the limits of knowledge. If the past has left traces behind it, it is not improbable that future events have, as it were, their roots in the present.

If a fortune-teller gives you minute details of past facts known only to yourself, why should he not foresee the events to be produced by existing causes? The world of ideas is cut out, so to speak, on the pattern of the physical world; the same phenomena should be discernible in both, allowing for the difference of the medium. As, for instance, a corporeal body actually projects an image upon the atmosphere—a spectral double detected and recorded by the daguerreotype; so also ideas, having a real and effective existence, leave an impression, as it were, upon the atmosphere of the spiritual world; they likewise produce effects, and exist spectrally (to coin a word to express phenomena for which

no words exist), and certain human beings are endowed with the faculty of discerning these "forms" or traces of ideas.

As for the material means employed to assist the seer—the objects arranged by the hands of the consultant that the accidents of his life may be revealed to him—this is the least inexplicable part of the process. Everything in the material world is part of a series of causes and effects. Nothing happens without a cause, every cause is a part of a whole, and consequently the whole leaves its impression on the slightest accident. Rabelais, the greatest mind among moderns, resuming Pythagoras, Hippocrates, Aristophanes, and Dante, pronounced three centuries ago that "man is a microcosm"—a little world. Three hundred years later, the great seer Swedenborg declared that "the world was a man." The prophet and the precursor of incredulity meet thus in the greatest of all formulas.

Everything in human life is predestined, so is it also with the existence of the planet. The least event, the most futile phenomena, are all subordinate parts of a scheme. Great things, therefore, great designs, and great thoughts are of necessity reflected in the smallest actions, and that so faithfully that should a conspirator shuffle and cut a pack of playing-cards, he will write the history of his plot for the eyes of the seer styled gypsy, fortune-teller, charlatan, or what not. If you once admit fate, which is to say, the chain of links of cause and effect, astrology has a *locus standi*, and becomes what it was of yore, a boundless science, requiring the same faculty of deduction by which Cuvier became so great, a faculty to be exercised spontaneously, however, and not merely in nights of study in the closet.

For seven centuries astrology and divination have exercised an influence not only (as at present) over the uneducated, but over the greatest minds, over kings and queens and wealthy people. Animal magnetism, one of the great sciences of antiquity, had its origin in occult philosophy; chemistry is the outcome of alchemy; phrenology and neurology are no less the fruit of similar studies. The first

illustrious workers in these, to all appearance, untouched fields, made one mistake, the mistake of all inventors; that is to say, they erected an absolute system on a basis of isolated facts for which modern analysis as yet cannot account. The Catholic Church, the law of the land, and modern philosophy, in agreement for once, combined to proscribe, persecute, and ridicule the mysteries of the Cabala as well as the adepts; the result is a lamentable interregnum of a century in occult philosophy. But the uneducated classes, and not a few cultivated people (women especially), continue to pay a tribute to the mysterious power of those who can raise the veil of the future; they go to buy hope, strength, and courage of the fortune-teller; in other words, to ask of him all that religion alone can give. So the art is still practiced in spite of a certain amount of risk. The eighteenth century encyclopedists procured tolerance for the sorcerer, he is no longer amenable to a court of law, unless indeed he lends himself to fraudulent practices, and frightens his "clients" to extort money from them, in which case he may be prosecuted on a charge of obtaining money under false pretences. Unluckily, the exercise of the sublime art is only too often used as a method of obtaining money under false pretences, and for the following reasons.

The seer's wonderful gifts are usually bestowed upon those who are described by the epithets rough and uneducated. The rough and uneducated are the chosen vessels into which God pours the elixirs at which we marvel. From among the rough and uneducated, prophets arise—an Apostle Peter, or St. Peter the Hermit. Wherever mental power is imprisoned, and remains intact and entire for want of an outlet in conversation, in politics, in literature, in the imaginings of the scholar, in the efforts of the statesman, in the conceptions of the inventor, or the soldier's toils of war; the fire within is apt to flash out in gleams of marvellously vivid light, like the sparks hidden in an unpolished diamond. Let the occasion come, and the spirit within kindles and glows, finds wings to traverse space, and the godlike power of be-

holding all things. The coal of yesterday under the play of some mysterious influence becomes a radiant diamond. Better educated people, many-sided and highly polished, continually giving out all that is in them, can never exhibit this supreme power, save by one of the miracles which God sometimes vouchsafes to work. For this reason the sooth-sayer is almost always a beggar, whose mind is virgin soil, a creature coarse to all appearance, a pebble borne along the torrent of misery and left in the ruts of life, where it spends nothing of itself save in mere physical suffering.

The prophet, the seer, in short, is some Martin le Laboureur making a Louis XVIII. tremble by telling him a secret known only to the King himself; or it is a Mlle. Lenormand, or a domestic servant like Mme. Fontaine, or again perhaps it is some half-idiotic negress, some herdsman living among his cattle, who receives the gift of vision; some Hindoo fakir, seated by a pagoda, mortifying the flesh till the spirit gains the mysterious power of the somnambulist.

Asia, indeed, through all time, has been the home of the heroes of occult science. Persons of this kind, recovering their normal state, are usually just as they were before. They fulfil, in some sort, the chemical and physical functions of bodies which conduct electricity; at times inert metal, at other times a channel filled with a mysterious current. In their normal condition they are given to practices which bring them before the magistrate, yea, verily, like the notorious Balthazar, even unto the criminal court, and so to the hulks. You could hardly find a better proof of the immense influence of fortune-telling upon the working classes than the fact that poor Pons's life and death hung upon the prediction that Mme. Fontaine was to make from the cards.

Although a certain amount of repetition is inevitable in a canvas so considerable and so full of detail as a complete picture of French society in the nineteenth century, it is needless to repeat the description of Mme. Fontaine's den, already given in "*Les Comédiens sans le savoir*"; suffice

it to say that Mme. Cibot used to go to Mme. Fontaine's house in the Rue Vieille-du-Temple as regularly as frequenters of the Café Anglais drop in at that restaurant for lunch. Mme. Cibot, being a very old customer, often introduced young persons and old gossips consumed with curiosity to the wise woman.

The old servant who acted as provost marshal flung open the door of the sanctuary with no further ceremony than the remark, "It's Mme. Cibot.—Come in, there's nobody here."

"Well, child, what can bring you here so early of a morning?" asked the sorceress, as Mme. Fontaine might well be called, for she was seventy-eight years old, and looked like one of the Parcæ.

"Something has given me a turn," said La Cibot: "I want the *grand jeu*; it is a question of my fortune." Therewith she explained her position, and wished to know if her sordid hopes were likely to be realized.

"Do you know what the *grand jeu* means?" asked Mme. Fontaine, with much solemnity.

"No. I haven't never seen the trick, I am not rich enough.—A hundred francs! It's not as if it cost so much! Where was the money to come from? But now I can't help myself, I must have it."

"I don't do it often, child," returned Mme. Fontaine; "I only do it for rich people on great occasions, and they pay me twenty-five louis for doing it; it tires me, you see, it wears me out. The 'Spirit' rives my inside, here. It is like going to the 'Sabbath,' as they used to say."

"But when I tell you that it means my whole future, my dear good Ma'am Fontaine—"

"Well, as it is you that have come to consult me so often, I will submit myself to the Spirit!" replied Mme. Fontaine, with a look of genuine terror on her face.

She rose from her filthy old chair by the fireside, and went to a table covered with a green cloth so worn that you could count the threads. A huge toad sat dozing there beside a cage inhabited by a black dishevelled-looking fowl.

"Astaroth! here, my son!" she said, and the creature looked up intelligently at her as she rapped him on the back with a long knitting-needle.—"And you, Mademoiselle Cléopâtre!—attention!" she continued, tapping the ancient fowl on the beak.

Then Mme. Fontaine began to think; for several seconds she did not move; she looked like a corpse, her eyes rolled in their sockets and grew white; then she rose stiff and erect, and a cavernous voice cried:

"Here I am!"

Automatically she scattered millet for Cléopâtre, took up the pack of cards, shuffled them convulsively, and held them out to Mme. Cibot to cut, sighing heavily all the time. At the sight of that image of Death in the filthy turban and uncanny looking bed-jacket, watching the black fowl as it pecked at the millet-grains, calling to the toad Astaroth to walk over the cards that lay out on the table, a cold thrill ran through Mme. Cibot; she shuddered. Nothing but strong belief can give strong emotions. An assured income, to be or not to be, that was the question.

The sorceress opened a magical work and muttered some unintelligible words in a sepulchral voice, looked at the remaining millet-seeds, and watched the way in which the toad retired. Then after seven or eight minutes, she turned her white eyes on the cards and expounded them.

"You will succeed, although nothing in the affair will fall out as you expect. You will have many steps to take, but you will reap the fruits of your labors. You will behave very badly; it will be with you as it is with all those who sit by a sick-bed and covet part of the inheritance. Great people will help you in this work of wrongdoing. Afterward in the death agony you will repent. Two escaped convicts, a short man with red hair and an old man with a bald head, will murder you for the sake of the money you will be supposed to have in the village whither you will retire with your second husband. Now, my daughter, it is still open to you to choose your course."

The excitement which seemed to glow within, lighting up the bony hollows about the eyes, was suddenly extinguished. As soon as the horoscope was pronounced, Mme. Fontaine's face wore a dazed expression; she looked exactly like a sleep-walker aroused from sleep, gazed about her with an astonished air, recognized Mme. Cibot, and seemed surprised by her terrified face.

"Well, child," she said, in a totally different voice, "are you satisfied?"

Mme. Cibot stared stupidly at the sorceress, and could not answer.

"Ah! you would have the *grand jeu*; I have treated you as an old acquaintance. I only want a hundred francs—"

"Cibot—going to die?" gasped the portress.

"So I have been telling you very dreadful things, have I?" asked Mme. Fontaine, with an extremely ingenuous air.

"Why, yes!" said La Cibot, taking a hundred francs from her pocket and laying them down on the edge of the table. "Going to be murdered, think of it—"

"Ah! there it is! You would have the *grand jeu*; but don't take on so, all the folk that are murdered on the cards don't die."

"But is it possible, Ma'am Fontaine?"

"Oh, I know nothing about it, my pretty dear! You would rap at the door of the future; I pull the cord, and It came."

"It, what?" asked Mme. Cibot.

"Well, then, the Spirit!" cried the sorceress impatiently.

"Good-by, Ma'am Fontaine," exclaimed the portress. "I did not know what the *grand jeu* was like. You have given me a good fright, that you have."

"The mistress will not put herself in that state twice in a month," said the servant, as she went with La Cibot to the landing. "She would do herself to death if she did, it tires her so. She will eat cutlets now and sleep for three hours afterward."

Out in the street, La Cibot took counsel of herself as she

went along, and, after the manner of all who ask for advice of any sort or description, she took the favorable part of the prediction and rejected the rest. The next day found her confirmed in her resolutions—she would set all in train to become rich by securing a part of Pons's collection. Nor for some time had she any other thought than the combination of various plans to this end. The faculty of self-concentration seen in rough uneducated persons, explained on a previous page, the reserve power accumulated in those whose mental energies are unworn by the daily wear and tear of social life, and brought into action so soon as that terrible weapon the "fixed idea" is brought into play—all this was pre-eminently manifested in La Cibot. Even as the "fixed idea" works miracles of evasion, and brings forth prodigies of sentiment, so greed transformed the portress till she became as formidable as a Nucingen at bay, as subtle beneath her seeming stupidity as the irresistible La Palférine.

About seven o'clock one morning, a few days afterward, she saw Rémonencq taking down his shutters. She went across to him.

"How could one find out how much the things yonder in my gentlemen's rooms are worth?" she asked in a wheedling tone.

"Oh! that is quite easy," replied the owner of the old curiosity shop. "If you will play fair and aboveboard with me, I will tell you of somebody, a very honest man, who will know the value of the pictures to a farthing—"

"Who?"

"M. Magus, a Jew. He only does business to amuse himself now."

Elie Magus has appeared so often in the "*Comédie Humaine*" that it is needless to say more of him here. Suffice it to add that he had retired from business, and as a dealer was following the example set by Pons the amateur. Well-known valuers like Henry, Messrs. Pigeot and Moret, Thérêt, Georges, and Roëhn, the experts of the Musée in fact, were but children compared with Elie Magus. He

could see a masterpiece beneath the accumulated grime of a century; he knew all schools, and the handwriting of all painters.

He had come to Paris from Bordeaux, and so long ago as 1835 he had retired from business without making any change for the better in his dress, so faithful is the race to old tradition. The persecutions of the Middle Ages compelled them to wear rags, to snuffle and whine and groan over their poverty in self-defence, till the habits induced by the necessities of other times have come to be, as usual, instinctive, a racial defect.

Elie Magus had amassed a vast fortune by buying and selling diamonds, pictures, lace, enamels, delicate carvings, old jewelry, and rarities of all kinds, a kind of commerce which has developed enormously of late, so much so indeed that the number of dealers has increased tenfold during the last twenty years in this city of Paris, whither all the curiosities in the world come to rub against one another. And for pictures there are but three marts in the world—Rome, London, and Paris.

Elie Magus lived in the *Chaussée des Minimes*, a short, broad street leading to the *Place Royale*. He had bought the house, an old-fashioned mansion, for a song, as the saying is, in 1831. Yet there were sumptuous apartments within it, decorated in the time of Louis XV.; for it had once been the *Hotel Maulaincourt*, built by the great President of the *Cour des Aides*, and its remote position had saved it at the time of the Revolution.

You may be quite sure that the old Jew had sound reasons for buying house property, contrary to the Hebrew law and custom. He had ended, as most of us end, with a hobby that bordered on a craze. He was as miserly as his friend the late lamented Gobseck; but he had been caught by the snare of the eyes, by the beauty of the pictures in which he dealt. As his taste grew more and more fastidious, it became one of the passions which princes alone can indulge when they are wealthy and art-lovers. As the second King of Prussia

found nothing that so kindled enthusiasm as the spectacle of a grenadier over six feet high, and gave extravagant sums for a new specimen to add to his living museum of a regiment, so the retired picture-dealer was roused to passion-pitch only by some canvas in perfect preservation, untouched since the master laid down the brush; and what was more, it must be a picture of the painter's best time. No great sales, therefore, took place but Elie Magus was there; every mart knew him, he travelled all over Europe. The ice-cold, money-worshipping soul in him kindled at the sight of a perfect work of art, precisely as a libertine, weary of fair women, is roused from apathy by the sight of a beautiful girl, and sets out afresh upon the quest of flawless loveliness. A Don Juan among fair works of art, a worshipper of the Ideal, Elie Magus had discovered joys that transcend the pleasure of the miser gloating over his gold—he lived in a seraglio of great paintings.

His masterpieces were housed as became the children of princes; the whole first floor of the great old mansion was given up to them. The rooms had been restored under Elie Magus's orders, and with what magnificence!

The windows were hung with the richest Venetian brocade; the most splendid carpets from the Savonnerie covered the parquetry flooring. The frames of the pictures, nearly a hundred in number, were magnificent specimens, regilded cunningly by Servais, the one gilder in Paris whom Elie Magus thought sufficiently painstaking; the old Jew himself had taught him to use the English leaf, which is infinitely superior to that produced by French gold-beaters. Servais is among gilders as Tohuvenin among bookbinders—an artist among craftsmen, making his work a labor of love. Every window in that gallery was protected by iron-barred shutters. Elie Magus himself lived in a couple of attics on the floor above; the furniture was wretched, the rooms were full of rags, and the whole place smacked of the Ghetto; Elie Magus was finishing his days without any change in his life.

The whole of the ground floor was given up to the picture trade (for the Jew still dealt in works of art). Here he stored his canvases, here also packing-cases were stowed on their arrival from other countries; and still there was room for a vast studio, where Moret, most skilful of restorers of pictures, a craftsman whom the Musée ought to employ, was almost always at work for Magus. The rest of the rooms on the ground floor were given up to Magus's daughter, the child of his old age, a Jewess beautiful as a Jewess can be when the Semitic type reappears in its purity and nobility in a daughter of Israel. Noémi was guarded by two servants, fanatical Jewesses, to say nothing of an advanced-guard, a Polish Jew, Abramko by name, once involved in a fabulous manner in political troubles, from which Elie Magus saved him as a business speculation. Abramko, porter of the silent, grim, deserted mansion, divided his office and his lodge with three remarkably ferocious animals—an English bulldog, a Newfoundland dog, and another of the Pyrenean breed.

Behold the profound observations of human nature upon which Elie Magus based his feeling of security, for secure he felt; he left home without misgivings, slept with both ears shut, and feared no attempt upon his daughter (his chief treasure), his pictures, or his money. In the first place, Abramko's salary was increased every year by two hundred francs so long as his master should live; and Magus, moreover, was training Abramko as a money-lender in a small way. Abramko never admitted anybody until he had surveyed them through a formidable grated opening. He was a Hercules for strength, he worshipped Elie Magus, as Sancho Panza worshipped Don Quixote. All day long the dogs were shut up without food; at nightfall Abramko let them loose; and by a cunning device the old Jew kept each animal at his post in the courtyard or the garden by hanging a piece of meat just out of reach on the top of a pole. The animals guarded the house, and sheer hunger guarded the dogs. No odor that reached their nos-

trils could tempt them from the neighborhood of that piece of meat; they would not have left their places at the foot of the poles for the most engaging female of the canine species. If a stranger by any chance intruded, the dogs suspected him of ulterior designs upon their rations, which were only taken down in the morning by Abramko himself when he awoke. The advantages of this fiendish scheme are patent. The animals never barked, Magus's ingenuity had made savages of them; they were treacherous as Mohicans. And now for the result.

One night burglars, emboldened by the silence, decided too hastily that it would be easy enough to "clean out" the old Jew's strong-box. One of their number told off to advance to the assault scrambled up the garden wall and prepared to descend. This the bulldog allowed him to do. The animal, knowing perfectly well what was coming, waited for the burglar to reach the ground; but when that gentleman directed a kick at him, the bulldog flew at the visitor's shins, and, making but one bite of it, snapped the ankle-bone clean in two. The thief had the courage to tear himself away, and returned, walking upon the bare bone of the mutilated stump till he reached the rest of the gang, when he fell fainting, and they carried him off. The "Police News," of course, did not fail to report this delightful night incident, but no one believed in it.

Magus at this time was seventy-five years old, and there was no reason why he should not live to a hundred. Rich man though he was, he lived like the Rémonencqs. His necessary expenses, including the money he lavished on his daughter, did not exceed three thousand francs. No life could be more regular; the old man rose as soon as it was light, breakfasted on bread rubbed with a clove of garlic, and ate no more food until dinner-time. Dinner, a meal frugal enough for a convent, he took at home. All the forenoon he spent among his treasures, walking up and down the gallery where they hung in their glory. He would dust everything himself, furniture and pictures; he never

wearied of admiring. Then he would go downstairs to his daughter, drink deep of a father's happiness, and start out upon his walks through Paris, to attend sales or visit exhibitions and the like.

If Élie Magus found a great work of art under the right conditions, the discovery put new life into the man; here was a bit of sharp practice, a bargain to make, a battle of Marengo to win. He would pile ruse on ruse to buy the new sultana as cheaply as possible. Magus had a map of Europe on which all great pictures were marked; his co-religionists in every city spied out business for him, and received a commission on the purchase. And then—what rewards for all his pains! The two lost Raphaels so earnestly sought after by Rafael lovers are both in his collection. Élie Magus owns the original portrait of "Giorgione's Mistress," the woman for whom the painter died; the so-called originals are merely copies of the famous picture, which is worth five hundred thousand francs, according to its owner's estimation. This Jew possesses Titian's masterpiece, an "Entombment" painted for Charles V., sent by the great man to the great Emperor with a holograph letter, now fastened down upon the lower part of the canvas. And Magus has yet another Titian, the original sketch from which all the portraits of Philip II. were painted. His remaining ninety-seven pictures are all of the same rank and distinction. Wherefore Magus laughs at our national collection, raked by the sunlight which destroys the fairest paintings, pouring in through panes of glass that act as lenses. Picture galleries can only be lighted from above; Magus opens and closes his shutters himself; he is as careful of his pictures as of his daughter, his second idol. And well the old picture-fancier knows the laws of the lives of pictures. To hear him talk, a great picture has a life of its own; it is changeable, it takes its beauty from the color of the light. Magus talks of his paintings as Dutch fanciers used to talk of their tulips; he will come home on purpose to see some one picture in the hour of its glory, when the light is bright and clean.

And Magus himself was a living picture among the motionless figures on the wall—a little old man, dressed in a shabby overcoat, a silk waistcoat, renewed twice in a score of years, and a very dirty pair of trousers, with a bald head, a face full of deep hollows, a wrinkled callous skin, a beard that had a trick of twitching its long white bristles, a menacing pointed chin, a toothless mouth, eyes bright as the eyes of his dogs in the yard, and a nose like an obelisk—there he stood in his gallery smiling at the beauty called into being by genius. A Jew surrounded by his millions will always be one of the finest spectacles which humanity can give. Robert Medal, our great actor, cannot rise to this height of poetry, sublime though he is.

Paris of all the cities of the world holds most of such men as Magus, strange beings with a strange religion in their heart of hearts. The London "eccentric" always finds that worship, like life, brings weariness and satiety in the end; the Parisian monomaniac lives cheerfully in concubinage with his crotchet to the last.

Often shall you meet in Paris some Pons, some Élie Magus, dressed badly enough, with his face turned from the rising sun (like the countenance of the perpetual secretary of the Académie), apparently heeding nothing, conscious of nothing, paying no attention to shop-windows nor to fair passers-by, walking at random, so to speak, with nothing in his pockets, and to all appearance an equally empty head. Do you ask to what Parisian tribe this manner of man belongs? He is a collector, a millionaire, one of the most impassioned souls upon earth; he and his like are capable of treading the miry ways that lead to the police-court if so they may gain possession of a cup, a picture, or some such rare unpublished piece as Élie Magus once picked up one memorable day in Germany.

This was the expert to whom Rémonencq with much mystery conducted La Cibot. Rémonencq always asked advice of Élie Magus when he met him in the streets; and more than once Magus had loaned him money through Abramko,

knowing Rémonencq's honesty. The Chaussée des Minimes is close to the Rue de Normandie, and the two fellow-conspirators reached the house in ten minutes.

"You will see the richest dealer in curiosities, the greatest connoisseur in Paris," Rémonencq had said. And Mme. Cibot, therefore, was struck dumb with amazement to be confronted with a little old man in a greatcoat too shabby for Cibot to mend, standing watching a painter at work upon an old picture in the chilly room on the vast ground floor. The old man's eyes, full of cold feline malignance, were turned upon her, and La Cibot shivered.

"What do you want, Rémonencq?" asked this person.

"It is a question of valuing some pictures; there is nobody but you in Paris who can tell a poor tinker-fellow like me how much he may give when he has not thousands to spend, like you."

"Where is it?"

"Here is the portress of the house where the gentleman lives; she does for him, and I have arranged with her—"

"Who is the owner?"

"M. Pons!" put in La Cibot.

"Don't know the name," said Magus, with an innocent air, bringing down his foot very gently upon his artist's toes.

Moret the painter, knowing the value of Pons's collection, had looked up suddenly at the name. It was a move too hazardous to try with any one but Rémonencq and La Cibot, but the Jew had taken the woman's measure at sight, and his eye was as accurate as a jeweller's scales. It was impossible that either of the couple should know how often Magus and old Pons had matched their claws. And, in truth, both rabid amateurs were jealous of each other. The old Jew had never hoped for a sight of a seraglio so carefully guarded; it seemed to him that his head was swimming. Pons's collection was the one private collection in Paris which could vie with his own. Pons's idea had occurred to Magus twenty years later; but as a dealer-amateur the door of Pons's museum had been closed for him, as for Dusommerard. Pons and Magus had

at heart the same jealousy. Neither of them cared about the kind of celebrity dear to the ordinary collector. And now for Élie Magus came his chance to see the poor musician's treasures! An amateur of beauty hiding in a boudoir for a stolen glance at a mistress concealed from him by his friend might feel as Elie Magus felt at that moment.

La Cibot was impressed by Rémonencq's respect for this singular person; real power, moreover, even when it cannot be explained, is always felt; the portress was supple and obedient, she dropped the autocratic tone which she was wont to use in her lodge and with the tenants, accepted Magus's conditions, and agreed to admit him into Pons's museum that very day.

So the enemy was to be brought into the citadel, and a stab dealt to Pons's very heart. For ten years Pons had carried his keys about with him; he had forbidden La Cibot to allow any one, no matter whom, to cross his threshold; and La Cibot had so far shared Schmucke's opinions of bric-à-brac that she had obeyed him. The good Schmucke, by speaking of the splendors as "chimeracks," and deploring his friend's mania, had taught La Cibot to despise the old rubbish, and so secured Pons's museum from invasion for many a long year.

When Pons took to his bed, Schmucke filled his place at the theatre and gave lessons for him at his boarding-schools. He did his utmost to do the work of two; but with Pons's sorrows weighing heavily upon his mind, the task took all his strength. He only saw his friend in the morning, and again at dinner-time. His pupils and the people at the theatre, seeing the poor German look so unhappy, used to ask for news of Pons; and so great was his grief that the indifferent would make the grimaces of sensibility which Parisians are wont to reserve for the greatest calamities. The very springs of life had been attacked, the good German was suffering from Pons's pain as well as from his own. When he gave a music lesson, he spent half the time in talking of Pons, interrupting himself to wonder whether his friend

felt better to-day, and the little schoolgirls listening heard lengthy explanations of Pons's symptoms. He would rush over to the Rue de Normandie in the interval between two lessons for the sake of a quarter of an hour with Pons.

When at last he saw that their common stock was almost exhausted, when Mme. Cibot (who had done her best to swell the expenses of the illness) came to him and frightened him; then the old music-master felt that he had courage of which he never thought himself capable—courage that rose above his anguish. For the first time in his life he set himself to earn money; money was needed at home. One of the schoolgirl pupils, really touched by their troubles, asked Schmucke how he could leave his friend alone. "Montemoiselle," he answered, with the sublime smile of those who think no evil, "ve haf Montame Zipod, ein dresure, montemoiselle, eine bearl! Bons is nursed like ein brince."

So while Schmucke trotted about the streets, La Cibot was mistress of the house and ruled the invalid. How should Pons superintend his self-appointed guardian angel, when he had taken no solid food for a fortnight, and lay there so weak and helpless that La Cibot was obliged to lift him up and carry him to the sofa while she made the bed?

La Cibot's visit to Elie Magus was paid (as might be expected) while Schmucke breakfasted. She came in again just as the German was bidding his friend good-by; for since she learned that Pons possessed a fortune, she never left the old bachelor; she brooded over him and his treasures like a hen. From the depths of a comfortable easy-chair at the foot of the bed she poured forth for Pons's delectation the gossip in which women of her class excel. With Machiavelian skill, she had contrived to make Pons think that she was indispensable to him; she coaxed and she wheedled, always uneasy, always on the alert. Mme. Fontaine's prophecy had frightened La Cibot; she vowed to herself that she would gain her ends by kindness. She would sleep secure on M. Pons's legacy, but her rascality should keep within the limits of the law. For ten years she had not suspected

the value of Pons's collection; she had a clear record behind her of ten years of devotion, honesty, and disinterestedness; it was a magnificent investment, and now she proposed to realize. In one day, Rémonencq's hint of money had hatched the serpent's egg, the craving for riches that had lain dormant within her for twenty years. Since she had cherished that craving, it had grown in force with the ferment of all the evil that lurks in the corners of the heart. How she acted upon the counsels whispered by the serpent will presently be seen.

"Well?" she asked of Schmucke, "has this cherub of ours had plenty to drink? Is he better?"

"He is not doing fery vell, tear Montame Zipod, not fery vell," said poor Schmucke, brushing away the tears from his eyes.

"Pooh! you make too much of it, my dear M. Schmucke; we must take things as we find them; Cibot might be at death's door, and I should not take it to heart as you do. Come! the cherub has a good constitution. And he has been steady, it seems, you see; you have no idea what an age sober people live. He is very ill, it is true, but with all the care I take of him, I shall bring him round. Be easy, look after your affairs, I will keep him company and see that he drinks his pints of barley water."

"Gif you vere not here, I should die of anxiety—" said Schmucke, squeezing his kind housekeeper's hand in both his own to express his confidence in her.

La Cibot wiped her eyes as she went back to the invalid's room.

"What is the matter, Mme. Cibot?" asked Pons.

"It is M. Schmucke that has upset me; he is crying as if you were dead," said she. "If you are not well, you are not so bad yet that nobody need cry over you; but it has given me such a turn! Oh, dear! oh, dear! how silly it is of me to get so fond of people, and to think more of you than of Cibot! For, after all, you aren't nothing to me, you are only my brother by Adam's side; and yet, whenever you are in

the question, it puts me in such a taking, upon my word it does! I would cut off my hand—my left hand, of course—to see you coming and going, eating your meals, and screwing bargains out of dealers as usual. If I had had a child of my own, I think I should have loved it as I love you, eh! There, take a drink, dearie; come now, empty the glass. Drink it off, monsieur, I tell you! The first thing Dr. Poulain said was, ‘If M. Pons has no mind to go to Père Lachaise, he ought to drink as many bucketsful of water in a day as an Auvergnat will sell.’ So, come now, drink—”

“But I do drink, Cibot, my good woman; I drink and drink till I am deluged—”

“That is right,” said the portress, as she took away the empty glass. “That is the way to get better. Dr. Poulain had another patient, ill of your complaint; but he had nobody to look after him; his children left him to himself, and he died because he didn’t drink enough—so you must drink, honey, you see—he died, and they buried him two months ago. And if you were to die, you know, you would drag down old M. Schmucke with you, sir. He is like a child. Ah! he loves you, he does, the dear lamb of a man; no woman never loved a man like that! He doesn’t care for meat nor drink; he has grown as thin as you are in the last fortnight, and you are nothing but skin and bones.—It makes me jealous to see it, for I am very fond of you; but not to that degree; I haven’t lost my appetite, quite the other way; always going up and down stairs, till my legs are so tired that I drop down of an evening like a lump of lead. Here am I neglecting my poor Cibot for you; Mlle. Rémonencq cooks his victuals for him, and he goes on about it and says that nothing is right! At that I tell him that one ought to put up with something for the sake of other people, and that you are so ill that I cannot leave you. In the first place, you can’t afford a nurse. And before I would have a nurse here!—I that have done for you these ten years. And those nurses are such eaters, they eat enough for ten; they want wine, and sugar, and foot-warmers, and all sorts

of comforts. And they rob their patients unless the patients leave them something in their wills. Have a nurse in here to-day, and to-morrow we should find a picture or something or other gone—”

“Oh! Mme. Cibot!” cried Pons, quite beside himself, “do not leave me! No one must touch anything—”

“I am here,” said La Cibot; “so long as I have the strength I shall be here.—Be easy. There was Dr. Poulain wanting to get a nurse for you; perhaps he has his eye on your treasures. I just snubbed him, I did. ‘The gentleman won’t have any one but me,’ I told him. ‘He is used to me, and I am used to him.’ So he said no more. A nurse, indeed! They are all thieves; I hate that sort of woman, I do. Here is a tale that will show you how sly they are. There was once an old gentleman—it was Dr. Poulain himself, mind you, who told me this—well, a Mme. Sabatier, a woman of thirty-six that used to sell slippers at the Palais Royal—you remember the Galerie at the Palais that they pulled down?”

Pons nodded.

“Well, at that time she had not done very well; her husband used to drink, and died of spontaneous imbuition; but she had been a fine woman in her time, truth to tell, not that it did her any good, though she had friends among the lawyers. So, being hard up, she became a monthly nurse, and lived in the Rue Barre du Bec. Well, she went out to nurse an old gentleman that had a disease of the urinary guts (saving your presence); they used to tap him like an artesian well, and he needed such care that she used to sleep on a truckle-bed in the same room with him. You would hardly believe such a thing!—‘Men respect nothing,’ you’ll tell me, ‘so selfish as they are.’ Well, she used to talk with him, you understand; she never left him, she amused him, she told him stories, she drew him on to talk (just as we are chatting away together now, you and I, eh?), and she found out that his nephews—the old gentleman had nephews—that his nephews were wretches; they had

worried him, and, final end of it, they had brought on this illness. Well, my dear sir, she saved his life, he married her, and they have a fine child; Ma'am Bordevin, the butcher's wife in the Rue Charlot, a relative of hers, stood godmother. There is luck for you!

"As for me, I am married; and if I have no children, I don't mind saying that it is Cibot's fault; he is too fond of me, but if I cared—never mind. What would have become of me and my Cibot if we had had a family, when we have not a penny to bless ourselves with after thirty years of faithful service? I have not a farthing belonging to nobody else, that is what comforts me. I have never wronged nobody.—Look here, suppose now (there is no harm in supposing when you will be out and about again in six weeks' time, and sauntering along the boulevard); well, suppose that you had put me down in your will; very good, I shouldn't never rest till I had found your heirs and given the money back. Such is my horror of anything that is not earned by the sweat of my brow.

"You will say to me, 'Why, Mme. Cibot, why should you worry yourself like that? You have fairly earned the money; you looked after your two gentlemen as if they had been your children; you saved them a thousand francs a year—' (for there are plenty, sir, you know, that would have had their ten thousand francs put out to interest by now if they had been in my place)—'so if the worthy gentleman leaves you a trifle of an annuity, it is only right.'—Suppose they told me that. Well, no; I am not thinking of myself.—I cannot think how some women can do a kindness thinking of themselves all the time. It is not doing good, sir, is it? I do not go to church myself, I haven't the time; but my conscience tells me what is right. . . . Don't you fidget like that, my lamb!—Don't scratch yourself! . . . Dear me, how yellow you grow! So yellow you are—quite brown. How funny it is that one can come to look like a lemon in three weeks! . . . Honesty is all that poor folk have and one must surely have something! Suppose that

you were just at death's door, I should be the first to tell you that you ought to leave all that you have to M. Schmucke. It is your duty, for he is all the family you have. He loves you, he does, as a dog loves his master."

"Ah! yes," said Pons; "nobody else has ever loved me all my life long—"

"Ah! that is not kind of you, sir," said Mme. Cibot; "then I do not love you, I suppose?"

"I do not say so, my dear Mme. Cibot."

"Good. You take me for a servant, do you, a common servant, as if I hadn't no heart! Goodness me! for eleven years you do for two old bachelors, you think of nothing but their comfort. I have turned half a score of green-grocers' shops upside down for you, I have talked people round to get you good Brie cheese; I have gone down as far as the market for fresh butter for you; I have taken such care of things that nothing of yours hasn't been chipped nor broken in all these ten years; I have just treated you like my own children; and then to hear a 'My dear Mme. Cibot,' that shows that there is not a bit of feeling for you in the heart of an old gentleman that you have cared for like a king's son! for the little King of Rome was not so well cared for as you have been. You may bet that he was not as well looked after. He died in his prime; there is proof for you. . . . Come, sir, you are unjust! You are ungrateful! It is because I am only a poor portress. Goodness me! are *you* one of those that think we are dogs?—"

"But, my dear Mme. Cibot—"

"Indeed, you that know so much, tell me why we porters are treated like this, and are supposed to have no feelings; people look down on us in these days when they talk of Equality!—As for me, am I not as good as another woman, I that was one of the finest women in Paris, and was called *La belle Écailière*, and received declarations seven or eight times a day? And even now if I liked— Look here, sir, you know that little scrubby marine store-dealer downstairs? Very well, he would marry me any day, if I were a widow

that is, with his eyes shut; he has had them looking wide open in my direction so often; he is always saying, 'Oh! what fine arms you have, Ma'am Cibot!—I dreamed last night that it was bread and I was butter, and I was spread on the top.' Look, sir, there is an arm!"

She rolled up her sleeve and displayed the shapeliest arm imaginable, as white and fresh as her hand was red and rough; a plump, round, dimpled arm, drawn from its merino sheath like a blade from the scabbard to dazzle Pons, who looked away.

"For every oyster the knife opened, that arm has opened a heart! Well, it belongs to Cibot, and I did wrong when I neglected him, poor dear; HE would throw himself over a precipice at a word from me; while you, sir, that call me 'My dear Mme. Cibot' when I do impossible things for you—"

"Do just listen to me," broke in the patient; "I cannot call you my mother, nor my wife—"

"No, never in all my born days will I take again to anybody—"

"Do let me speak!" continued Pons. "Let us see; I put M. Schmucke first—"

"M. Schmucke! there is a heart for you," cried La Cibot. "Ah! he loves me, but then he is poor. It is money that deadens the heart; and you are rich! Oh! well, take a nurse, you will see what a life she will lead you; she will torment you, you will be like a cockchafer on a string. The doctor will say that you must have plenty to drink, and she will do nothing but feed you. She will bring you to your grave and rob you. You do not deserve to have a Mme. Cibot!—there! When Dr. Poulain comes, ask him for a nurse."

"Oh, fiddlestickend!" the patient cried angrily. "Will you listen to me? When I spoke of my friend Schmucke, I was not thinking of women. I know quite well that no one cares for me so sincerely as you do, you and Schmucke—"

"Have the goodness not to irritate yourself in this way!"

exclaimed La Cibot, plunging down upon Pons and covering him by force with the bedclothes.

"How should I not love you?" said poor Pons.

"You love me, really? . . . There, there, forgive me, sir!" she said, crying and wiping her eyes. "Ah, yes, of course, you love me as you love a servant, that is the way!—a servant to whom you throw an annuity of six hundred francs like a crust you fling into a dog's kennel—"

"Oh! Mme. Cibot," cried Pons, "for what do you take me? You do not know me."

"Ah! you will care even more than that for me," she said, meeting Pons's eyes. "You will love your kind old Cibot like a mother, will you not? A mother, that is it! I am your mother; you are both of you my children. . . . Ah, if I only knew them that caused you this sorrow, I would do that which would bring me into the police courts, and even to prison; I would tear their eyes out! Such people deserve to die at the Barrière Saint-Jacques, and that is too good for such scoundrels. . . . So kind, so good as you are (for you have a heart of gold), you were sent into the world to make some woman happy? . . . Yes, you would have her happy, as anybody can see; you were cut out for that. In the very beginning, when I saw how you were with M. Schmucke, I said to myself, 'M. Pons has missed the life he was meant for; he was made to be a good husband.' Come, now, you like women."

"Ah yes," said Pons, "and no woman has been mine."

"Really?" exclaimed La Cibot, with a provocative air as she came nearer and took Pons's hand in hers. "Do you not know what it is to love a woman that will do anything for her lover? Is it possible? If I were in your place, I should not wish to leave this world for another until I had known the greatest happiness on earth! . . . Poor dear! If I was now what I was once, I would leave Cibot for you! upon my word, I would! Why, with a nose shaped like that—for you have a fine nose—how did you manage it, poor cherub? . . . You will tell me that 'not every woman

knows a man when she sees him'; and a pity it is that they marry so at random as they do, it makes you sorry to see it. —Now, for my own part, I should have thought that you had had mistresses by the dozen—dancers, actresses, and duchesses, for you went out so much. . . . When you went out, I used to say to Cibot, 'Look! there is M. Pons going a-gallivanting,' on my word, I did, I was so sure that women ran after you. Heaven made you for love. . . . Why, my dear sir, I found that out the first day that you dined at home, and you were so touched with M. Schmucke's pleasure. And next day M. Schmucke kept saying to me, 'Montame Zipod, he haf tined hier,' with the tears in his eyes, till I cried along with him like a fool, as I am. And how sad he looked when you took to gadding abroad again and dining out! Poor man, you never saw any one so disconsolate! Ah! you are quite right to leave everything to him. Dear, worthy man, why, he is as good as a family to you, he is! Do not forget him; for if you do, God will not receive you into His Paradise, for those that have been ungrateful to their friends and left them no *rentes* will not go to heaven."

In vain Pons tried to put in a word; La Cibot talked as the wind blows. Means of arresting steam-engines have been invented, but it would tax a mechanician's genius to discover any plan for stopping a portress's tongue.

"I know what you mean," continued she. "But it does not kill you, my dear gentleman, to make a will when you are out of health; and in your place I would not leave that poor dear alone, for fear that something might happen; he is like God Almighty's lamb, he knows nothing about nothing, and I should not like him to be at the mercy of those sharks of lawyers and a wretched pack of relations. Let us see now, has one of them come here to see you in twenty years? And would you leave your property to *them*? Do you know, they say that all these things here are worth something."

"Why, yes," said Pons.

"Rémonencq, who deals in pictures, and knows that you are an amateur, says that he would be quite ready to pay you an annuity of thirty thousand francs so long as you live, to have the pictures afterward. . . . There is a chance! If I were you, I should take it. Why, I thought he said it for a joke when he told me that. You ought to let M. Schmucke know the value of all those things, for he is a man that could be cheated like a child. He has not the slightest idea of the value of these fine things that you have! He so little suspects it that he would give them away for a morsel of bread if he did not keep them all his life for love of you; always supposing that he lives after you, for he will die of your death. But *I* am here; I will take his part against anybody and everybody! . . . I and Cibot will defend him."

"Dear Mme. Cibot!" said Pons, "what would have become of me if it had not been for you and Schmucke?" He felt touched by this horrible prattle; the feeling in it seemed to be ingenuous, as it usually is in the speech of the people.

"Ah! we really are your only friends on earth, that is very true, that is. But two good hearts are worth all the families in the world.—Don't talk of families to me! A family, as the old actor said of the tongue, is the best and the worst of all things. . . . Where are those relations of yours now? Have you any? I have never seen them—"

"They have brought me to lie here," said Pons, with intense bitterness.

"So you have relations! . . ." cried La Cibot, springing up as if her easy-chair had been heated red-hot. "Oh, well, they are a nice lot, are your relations! What! these three weeks—for this is the twentieth day, to-day, that you have been ill and like to die—in these three weeks they have not come once to ask for news of you? That's a trifle too strong, that is! . . . Why, in your place, I would leave all I had to the Foundling Hospital sooner than give them one farthing!"

"Well, my dear Mme. Cibot, I meant to leave all that

I had to a first cousin once removed, the daughter of my first cousin, President Camusot, you know, who came here one morning nearly two months ago."

"Oh! a little stout man who sent his servants to beg your pardon—for his wife's blunder?—The housemaid came asking me questions about you, an affected old creature she is; my fingers itched to give her velvet tippet a dusting with my broom handle! A servant wearing a velvet tippet! did anybody ever see the like? No, upon my word, the world is turned upside down; what is the use of making a Revolution? Dine twice a day if you can afford it, you scamps of rich folk! But laws are no good, I tell you, and nothing will be safe if Louis-Philippe does not keep people in their places; for, after all, if we are all equal, eh, sir? a housemaid didn't ought to have a velvet tippet, while I, Madame Cibot, haven't one, after thirty years of honest work.—There is a pretty thing for you! People ought to be able to tell who you are. A housemaid is a housemaid, just as I myself am a portress. Why do they have silk epaulets in the army? Let everybody keep their place. Look here, do you want me to tell you what all this comes to? Very well, France is going to the dogs. . . . If the Emperor had been here, things would have been very different, wouldn't they, sir? . . . So I said to Cibot, I said, 'See here, Cibot, a hours where the servants wear velvet tippets belongs to people that have no heart in them —' "

"No heart in them, that is just it," repeated Pons. And with that he began to tell Mme. Cibot about his troubles and mortifications, she pouring out abuse of the relations the while and showing exceeding tenderness on every fresh sentence in the sad history. She fairly wept at last.

To understand the sudden intimacy between the old musician and Mme. Cibot, you have only to imagine the position of an old bachelor lying on his bed of pain, seriously ill for the first time in his life. Pons felt that he was alone in the world; the days that he spent by himself were all the longer because he was struggling with the indefinable nausea of a

liver complaint which blackens the brightest life. Cut off from all his many interests, the sufferer falls a victim to a kind of nostalgia; he regrets the many sights to be seen for nothing in Paris. The isolation, the darkened days, the suffering that affects the mind and spirits even more than the body, the emptiness of the life—all these things tend to induce him to cling to the human being who waits on him as a drowned man clings to a plank; and this especially if the bachelor patient's character is as weak as his nature is sensitive and credulous.

Pons was charmed to hear La Cibot's tittle-tattle. Schmucke, Mme. Cibot, and Dr. Poulain meant all humanity to him now, when his sick-room became the universe. If invalids' thoughts, as a rule, never travel beyond the little space over which their eyes can wander; if their selfishness, in its narrow sphere, subordinates all creatures and all things to itself, you can imagine the lengths to which an old bachelor may go. Before three weeks were out he had even gone so far as to regret, once and again, that he had not married Madeleine Vivet! Mme. Cibot, too, had made immense progress in his esteem in those three weeks; without her he felt that he should have been utterly lost; for as for Schmucke, the poor invalid looked upon him as a second Pons. La Cibot's prodigious art consisted in expressing Pons's own ideas, and this she did quite unconsciously.

"Ah! here comes the doctor!" she exclaimed, as the bell rang, and away she went, knowing very well that Rémonencq had come with the Jew.

"Make no noise, gentlemen," said she, "he must not know anything. He is all on the fidget when his precious treasures are concerned."

"A walk round will be enough," said the Hebrew, armed with a magnifying-glass and a lorgnette.

The greater part of Pons's collection was installed in a great old-fashioned salon such as French architects used to build for the old *noblesse*; a room twenty-five feet broad,

some thirty feet in length, and thirteen in height. Pons's pictures to the number of sixty-seven hung upon the white-and-gold panelled walls; time, however, had reddened the gold and softened the white to an ivory tint, so that the whole was toned down, and the general effect subordinated to the effect of the pictures. Fourteen statues stood on pedestals set in the corners of the room, or among the pictures, or on brackets inlaid by Boule; sideboards of carved ebony, royally rich, surrounded the walls to elbow height, all the shelves filled with curiosities; in the middle of the room stood a row of carved credence-tables, covered with rare miracles of handicraft—with ivories and bronzes, wood-carvings and enamels, jewelry and porcelain.

As soon as Elie Magus entered the sanctuary, he went straight to the four masterpieces; he saw at a glance that these were the gems of Pons's collection, and masters lacking in his own. For Elie Magus these were the naturalist's *desiderata* for which men undertake long voyages from east to west, through deserts and tropical countries, across southern savannas, through virgin forests.

The first was a painting by Sebastian del Piombo, the second a Fra Bartolommeo della Porta, the third a Hobbema landscape, and the fourth and last a Dürer—a portrait of a woman. Four diamonds indeed! In the history of art, Sebastian del Piombo is like a shining point in which three schools meet, each bringing its pre-eminent qualities. A Venetian painter, he came to Rome to learn the manner of Rafael under the direction of Michelangelo, who would fain oppose Rafael on his own ground by pitting one of his own lieutenants against the reigning king of art. And so it came to pass that in del Piombo's indolent genius Venetian color was blended with Florentine composition and a something of Rafael's manner in the few pictures which he deigned to paint, and the sketches were made for him, it is said, by Michelangelo himself.

If you would see the perfection to which the painter attained (armed as he was with triple power), go to the

Louvre and look at the Baccio Bandinelli portrait; you might place it beside Titian's "Man with a Glove," or by that other "Portrait of an Old Man" in which Rafael's consummate skill blends with Correggio's art; or, again, compare it with Lionardo da Vinci's "Charles VIII.," and the picture would scarcely lose. The four pearls are equal; there is the same lustre and sheen, the same rounded completeness, the same brilliancy. Art can go no further than this. Art has risen above Nature, since Nature only gives her creatures a few brief years of life.

Pons possessed one example of this immortal great genius and incurably indolent painter; it was a "Knight of Malta," a Templar kneeling in prayer. The picture was painted on slate, and in its unfaded color and its finish was immeasurably finer than the "Baccio Bandinelli."

Fra Bartolommeo was represented by a "Holy Family," which many connoisseurs might have taken for a Rafael. The Hobbema would have fetched sixty thousand francs at a public sale; and as for the Dürer, it was equal to the famous "Holzschuer" portrait at Nuremberg, for which the Kings of Bavaria, Holland, and Prussia have vainly offered two hundred thousand francs again and again. Was it the portrait of the wife or the daughter of Holzschuer, Albrecht Dürer's personal friend?—The hypothesis seems to be a certainty, for the attitude of the figure in Pons's picture suggests that it is meant for a pendant, the position of the coat-of-arms is the same as in the Nuremberg portrait; and, finally, the *ætatis suæ* XLI. accords perfectly with the age inscribed on the picture religiously kept by the Holzschuers of Nuremberg, and but recently engraved.

The tears stood in Elie Magus's eyes as he looked from one masterpiece to another. He turned round to La Cibot, "I will give you a commission of two thousand francs on each of the pictures if you can arrange that I shall have them for forty thousand francs," he said. La Cibot was amazed at this good fortune dropped from the sky. Admiration, or, to be more accurate, delirious joy, had wrought

such havoc in the Jew's brain that it had actually unsettled his habitual greed, and he fell headlong into enthusiasm, as you see.

"And I—?" put in Rémonencq, who knew nothing about pictures.

"Everything here is equally good," the Jew said cunningly, lowering his voice for Rémonencq's ear; "take ten pictures just as they come and on the same conditions. Your fortune will be made."

Again the three thieves looked each other in the face, each one of them overcome with the keenest of all joys—sated greed. All of a sudden the sick man's voice rang through the room; the tones vibrated like the strokes of a bell—

"Who is there?" called Pons.

"Monsieur! just go back to bed!" exclaimed La Cibot, springing upon Pons and dragging him by main force. "What next! Have you a mind to kill yourself?—Very well, then, it is not Dr. Poulain, it is Rémonencq, good soul, so anxious that he has come to ask after you!—Everybody is so fond of you that the whole house is in a flutter. So what is there to fear?"

"It seems to me that there are several of you," said Pons.

"Several? that is good! What next! Are you dreaming?—You will go off your head before you have done, upon my word!—Here, look!"—and La Cibot flung open the door, signed to Magus to go, and beckoned to Rémonencq.

"Well, my dear sir," said the Auvergnat, now supplied with something to say, "I just came to ask after you, for the whole house is alarmed about you.—Nobody likes Death to set foot in a house!—And lastly, Daddy Monistrol, whom you know very well, told me to tell you that if you wanted money he was at your service—"

"He sent you here to take a look round at my knick-knacks!" returned the old collector from his bed; and the sour tones of his voice were full of suspicion.

A sufferer from liver complaint nearly always takes mo-

mentary and special dislikes to some person or thing, and concentrates all his ill-humor upon the object. Pons imagined that some one had designs upon his precious collection; the thought of guarding it became a fixed idea with him; Schmucke was continually sent to see if any one had stolen into the sanctuary.

"Your collection is fine enough to attract the attention of *chineurs*," Rémonencq answered astutely. "I am not much in the art line myself; but you are supposed to be such a great connoisseur, sir, that, little as I know, I would willingly buy your collection, sir, with my eyes shut—supposing, for instance, that you should need money some time or other, for nothing costs so much as these confounded illnesses; there was my sister now, when she had a bad turn, she spent thirty sous on medicine in ten days, when she would have got better again just as well without. Doctors are rascals that take advantage of your condition to—"

"Thank you, good-day, good-day," broke in Pons, eying the marine store-dealer uneasily.

"I will go to the door with him, for fear he should touch something," La Cibot whispered to her patient.

"Yes, yes," answered the invalid, thanking her by a glance.

La Cibot shut the bedroom door behind her, and Pons's suspicions awoke again at once.

She found Magus standing motionless before the four pictures. His immobility, his admiration, can only be understood by other souls open to ideal beauty, to the ineffable joy of beholding art made perfect: such as these can stand for whole hours before the "Antiope"—Correggio's masterpiece—before Lionardo's "Gioconda," Titian's "Mistress," Andrea del Sarto's "Holy Family," Domenichino's "Children among the Flowers," Rafael's little cameo, or his "Portrait of an Old Man"—Art's greatest masterpieces.

"Be quick and go, and make no noise," said La Cibot.

The Jew walked slowly backward, giving the pictures such a farewell gaze as a lover gives his love. Outside, on

the landing, La Cibot tapped his bony arm. His rapt contemplation had put an idea into her head.

"Make it *four* thousand francs for each picture," said she, "or I do nothing—"

"I am so poor! . . ." began Magus. "I want the pictures simply for their own sake, simply and solely for the love of art, my dear lady."

"I can understand that love, sonny, you are so dried up. But if you do not promise me sixteen thousand francs now, before Rémonencq here, I shall want twenty to-morrow."

"Sixteen; I promise," returned the Jew, frightened by the woman's rapacity.

La Cibot turned to Rémonencq.

"What oath can a Jew swear?" she inquired.

"You may trust him," replied the marine store-dealer. "He is as honest as I am."

"Very well; and you?" asked she, "if I get him to sell them to you, what will you give me?"

"Half-share of profits," Rémonencq answered briskly.

"I would rather have a lump sum," returned La Cibot; "I am not in business myself."

"You understand business uncommonly well!" put in Elie Magus, smiling; "a famous saleswoman you would make!"

"I want her to take me into partnership, me and my goods," said the Auvergnat, as he took La Cibot's plump arm and gave it playful taps like hammer-strokes. "I don't ask her to bring anything into the firm but her good looks! You are making a mistake when you stick to your Turk of a Cibot and his needle. Is a little bit of a porter the man to make a woman rich—a fine woman like you? Ah, what a figure you would make in a shop on the Boulevard, all among the curiosities, gossiping with amateurs and twisting them round your fingers! Just you leave your lodge as soon as you have lined your purse here, and you shall see what will become of us both."

"Lined my purse!" cried the Cibot. "I am incapable

of taking the worth of a single pin: you mind that, Rémonencq! I am known in the neighborhood for an honest woman, I am."

La Cibot's eyes flashed fire.

"There, never mind," said Elie Magus; "this Auvergnat seems to be too fond of you to mean to insult you."

"How she would draw on the customers!" cried the Auvergnat.

Mme. Cibot softened at this.

"Be fair, sonnies," quoth she, "and judge for yourselves how I am placed. These ten years past I have been wearing my life out for those two old bachelors yonder, and neither of them has given me anything but words. Rémonencq will tell you that I feed them by contract, and lose twenty or thirty sous a day; all my savings have gone that way, by the soul of my mother (the only author of my days that I ever knew); this is as true as that I live, and that this is the light of day, and may my coffee poison me if I lie about a farthing. Well, there is one up there that will die soon, eh? and he the richer of the two that I have treated like my own children. Would you believe it, my dear sir, I have told him over and over again for days past that he is at death's door (for Dr. Poulain has given him up), and yet, if the old hunks had never heard of me, he could not say less about putting my name down in his will. We shall only get our due by taking it, upon my word, as an honest woman, for as for trusting to the next-of-kin!—No fear! There! look you here, words don't stink; it is a bad world!"

"That is true," Elie Magus answered cunningly, "that is true; and it is just the like of us that are among the best," he added, looking at Rémonencq.

"Just let me be," returned La Cibot; "I am not speaking of you. 'Pressing company is always accepted,' as the old actor said. I swear to you that the two gentlemen already owe me nearly three thousand francs; the little I have is gone by now in medicine and things on their account; and now suppose they refuse to recognize my advances? I am

so stupidly honest that I did not dare to say nothing to them about it. Now, you that are in business, my dear sir, do you advise me to go to a lawyer?"

"A lawyer?" cried Rémonencq; "you know more about it than all the lawyers put together—"

Just at that moment a sound echoed in the great staircase, a sound as if some heavy body had fallen in the dining-room.

"Oh, goodness me!" exclaimed La Cibot; "it seems to me that monsieur has just taken a ticket for the ground floor."

She pushed her fellow-conspirators out at the door, and while the pair descended the stairs with remarkable agility, she ran to the dining-room, and there beheld Pons, in his shirt, stretched out upon the tiles. He had fainted. She lifted him as if he had been a feather, carried him back to his room, laid him in bed, burned feathers under his nose, bathed his temples with eau-de-cologne, and at last brought him to consciousness. When she saw his eyes unclose and life return, she stood over him, hands on hips.

"No slippers! In your shirt! That is the way to kill yourself! Why do you suspect me?—If this is to be the way of it, I wish you good-day, sir. Here have I served you these ten years, I have spent money on you till my savings are all gone, to spare trouble to that poor M. Schmucke, crying like a child on the stairs—and *this* is my reward! You have been spying on me. God has punished you! It serves you right! Here am I straining myself to carry you, running the risk of doing myself a mischief that I shall feel all my days. Oh dear, oh dear! and the door left open too—"

"You were talking with some one. Who was it?"

"Here are notions!" cried La Cibot. "What next! Am I your bond-slave? Am I to give account of myself to you? Do you know that if you bother me like this, I shall clear out! You shall take a nurse."

Frightened by this threat, Pons unwittingly allowed La

Cibot to see the extent of the power of her sword of Damocles.

"It is my illness!" he pleaded piteously.

"It is as you please," La Cibot answered roughly.

She went. Pons, confused, remorseful, admiring his nurse's scolding devotion, reproached himself for his behavior. The fall on the paved floor of the dining-room had shaken and bruised him, and aggravated his illness, but Pons was scarcely conscious of his physical sufferings.

La Cibot met Schmucke on the staircase.

"Come here, sir," she said. "There is bad news, there is! M. Pons is going off his head! Just think of it! he got up with nothing on, he came after me—and down he came full-length. Ask him why—he knows nothing about it. He is in a bad way. I did nothing to provoke such violence, unless, perhaps, I waked up ideas by talking to him of his early amours. Who knows men? Old libertines that they all are. I ought not to have shown him my arms when his eyes were glittering like *carbuckles*."

Schmucke listened. Mme. Cibot might have been talking Hebrew for anything that he understood.

"I have given myself a wrench that I shall feel all my days," added she, making as though she were in great pain. (Her arms did, as a matter of fact, ache a little, and the muscular fatigue suggested an idea, which she proceeded to turn to profit.) "So stupid I am. When I saw him lying there on the floor, I just took him up in my arms as if he had been a child, and carried him back to bed, I did. And I strained myself, I can feel it now. Ah! how it hurts!—I am going downstairs. Look after our patient. I will send Cibot for Dr. Poulain. I had rather die outright than be crippled."

La Cibot crawled downstairs, clinging to the banisters, and writhing and groaning so piteously that the tenants, in alarm, came out upon their landings. Schmucke supported the suffering creature, and told the story of La Cibot's devotion, the tears running down his cheeks as he spoke. Before

very long the whole house, the whole neighborhood indeed, had heard of Mme. Cibot's heroism; she had given herself a dangerous strain, it was said, with lifting one of the "nut-crackers."

Schmucke meanwhile went to Pons's bedside with the tale. Their factotum was in a frightful state. "What shall we do without her?" they said, as they looked at each other; but Pons was so plainly the worse for his escapade that Schmucke did not dare to scold him.

"Gonfounded pric-à-prac! I would sooner purn dem dan loose mein friend!" he cried, when Pons told him of the cause of the accident. "To susbeet Montame Zipod, dot lend us her safings! It is not goot; but it is der illness—"

"Ah! what an illness! I am not the same man, I can feel it," said Pons. "My dear Schmucke, if only you did not suffer through me!"

"Scold me," Schmucke answered, "und leaf Montame Zipod in beace."

As for Mme. Cibot, she soon recovered in Dr. Poulain's hands; and her restoration, bordering on the miraculous, shed additional lustre on her name and fame in the Marais. Pons attributed the success to the excellent constitution of the patient, who resumed her ministrations seven days later, to the great satisfaction of her two gentlemen. Her influence in their household and her tyranny was increased a hundred-fold by the accident. In the course of a week, the two nutcrackers ran into debt; Mme. Cibot paid the outstanding amounts, and took the opportunity to obtain from Schmucke (how easily!) a receipt for two thousand francs, which she had loaned, she said, to the friends.

"Oh, what a doctor M. Poulain is!" cried La Cibot, for Pons's benefit. "He will bring you through, my dear sir, for he pulled me out of my coffin! Cibot, poor man, thought I was dead. . . . Well, Dr. Poulain will have told you that while I was in bed I thought of nothing but you. 'God above,' said I, 'take me, and let my dear M. Pons live—'"

"Poor dear Mme. Cibot, you all but crippled yourself for me."

"Ah! but for Dr. Poulain I should have been put to bed with a shovel by now, as we shall all be one day. Well, what must be must, as the old actor said. One must take things philosophically. How did you get on without me?"

"Schmucke nursed me," said the invalid; "but our poor money-box and our lessons have suffered. I do not know how he managed."

"Calm yourself, Bons," exclaimed Schmucke; "ve haf in Zipod ein panker—"

"Do not speak of it, my lamb. You are our children, both of you," cried La Cibot. "Our savings will be well invested; you are safer than the Bank. So long as we have a morsel of bread, half of it is yours. It is not worth mentioning—"

"Boor Montame Zipod!" said Schmucke, and he went.

Pons said nothing.

"Would you believe it, my cherub?" said La Cibot, as the sick man tossed uneasily, "in my agony—for it was a near squeak for me—the thing that worried me most was the thought that I must leave you alone, with no one to look after you, and my poor Cibot without a farthing. . . . My savings are such a trifle, that I only mention them in connection with my death and Cibot, an angel that he is! No. He nursed me as if I had been a queen, he did, and cried like a calf over me! . . . But I counted on you, upon my word. I said to him, 'There, Cibot! my gentlemen will not let you starve—' "

Pons made no reply to this thrust *ad testamentum*; but as the portress waited for him to say something—"I shall recommend you to M. Schmucke," he said at last.

"Ah!" cried La Cibot, "whatever you do will be right; I trust in you and your heart. Let us never talk of this again; you make me feel ashamed, my cherub. Think of getting better; you will outlive us all yet."

Profound uneasiness filled Mme. Cibot's mind. She cast about for some way of making the sick man understand that

she expected a legacy. That evening, when Schmucke was eating his dinner as usual by Pons's bedside, she went out, hoping to find Dr. Poulain at home.

Dr. Poulain lived in the Rue d'Orléans in a small ground-floor establishment, consisting of a lobby, a sitting-room, and two bedrooms. A closet, opening into the lobby and the bedroom, had been turned into a study for the doctor. The kitchen, the servant's bedroom, and a small cellar were situated in a wing of the house, a huge pile built in the time of the Empire, on the site of an old mansion of which the garden still remained, though it had been divided among the three ground-floor tenants.

Nothing had been changed in the doctor's house since it was built. Paint and paper and ceilings were all redolent of the Empire. The grimy deposits of forty years lay thick on walls and ceilings, on paper and paint and mirrors and gilding. And yet, this little establishment, in the depths of the Marais, paid a rent of a thousand francs.

Mme. Poulain, the doctor's mother, aged sixty-seven, was ending her days in the second bedroom. She worked for a breeches-maker, stitching men's leggings, breeches, belts, and braces, anything, in fact, that is made in a way of business which has somewhat fallen off of late years. Her whole time was spent in keeping her son's house and superintending the one servant; she never went abroad, and took the air in the little garden entered through the glass door of the sitting-room. Twenty years previously, when her husband died, she had sold his business to his best workman, who gave his master's widow work enough to earn a daily wage of thirty sous. She had made every sacrifice to educate her only son. At all costs, he should occupy a higher station than his father before him; and now she was proud of her *Æsculapius*, she believed in him, and sacrificed everything to him as before. She was happy to take care of him, to work and put by a little money, and dream of nothing but his welfare, and love him with an intelligent love of which every mother is not capable. For instance, Mme. Poulain

remembered that she had been a working-girl. She would not injure her son's prospects; he should not be shamed by his mother (for the good woman's grammar was something of the same kind as Mme. Cibot's); and for this reason she kept in the background, and went to her room of her own accord if any distinguished patient came to consult the doctor, or if some old schoolfellow or fellow-student chanced to call. Dr. Poulain had never had occasion to blush for the mother whom he revered; and this sublime love of hers more than atoned for a defective education.

The breeches-maker's business sold for about twenty thousand francs, and the widow invested the money in the Funds in 1820. The income of eleven hundred francs per annum derived from this source was, at one time, her whole fortune. For many a year the neighbors used to see the doctor's linen hanging out to dry upon a clothes-line in the garden, and the servant and Mme. Poulain thriftily washed everything at home; a piece of domestic economy which did not a little to injure the doctor's practice, for it was thought that, if he was so poor, it must be through his own fault. Her eleven hundred francs scarcely did more than pay the rent. During those early days, Mme. Poulain, good, stout, little old woman, was the breadwinner, and the poor household lived upon her earnings. After twelve years of perseverance upon a rough and stony road, Dr. Poulain at last was making an income of three thousand francs, and Mme. Poulain had an income of about five thousand francs at her disposal. Five thousand francs for those who know Paris means a bare subsistence.

The sitting-room, where patients waited for an interview, was shabbily furnished. There was the inevitable mahogany sofa covered with yellow-flowered Utrecht velvet, four easy-chairs, a tea-table, a console, and half-a-dozen chairs, all the property of the deceased breeches-maker, and chosen by him. A lyre-shaped clock between two Egyptian candlesticks still preserved its glass shade intact. You asked yourself how the yellow chintz window-curtains, covered

with red flowers, had contrived to hang together for so long; for evidently they had come from the Jouy factory, and Oberkampf received the Emperor's congratulations upon similar hideous productions of the cotton industry in 1809.

The doctor's consulting-room was fitted up in the same style, with household stuff from the paternal chamber. It looked stiff, poverty-stricken, and bare. What patient could put faith in the skill of an unknown doctor who could not even furnish his house? And this in a time when advertising is all-powerful; when we gild the gas-lamps in the Place de la Concorde to console the poor man for his poverty by reminding him that he is rich as a citizen.

The antechamber did duty as a dining-room. The servant sat at her sewing there whenever she was not busy in the kitchen or keeping the doctor's mother company. From the dingy short curtains in the windows you could have guessed at the shabby thrift behind them without setting foot in the dreary place. What could those wall-cupboards contain but stale scraps of food, chipped earthenware, corks used over and over again indefinitely, soiled table-linen, odds and ends that could descend but one step lower into the dust-heap, and all the squalid necessities of a pinched household in Paris?

In these days, when the five-franc piece is always lurking in our thoughts and intruding itself into our speech, Dr. Poulain, aged thirty-three, was still a bachelor. Heaven had bestowed on him a mother with no connections. In ten years he had not met with the faintest pretext for a romance in his professional career; his practice lay among clerks and small manufacturers, people in his own sphere of life, with homes very much like his own. His richer patients were butchers, bakers, and the more substantial tradespeople of the neighborhood. These, for the most part, attributed their recovery to Nature, as an excuse for paying for the services of a medical man who came on foot at the rate of two francs per visit. In his profession, a carriage is more necessary than medical skill.

A humdrum monotonous life tells in the end upon the most adventurous spirit. A man fashions himself to his lot, he accepts a commonplace existence; and Dr. Poulain, after ten years of his practice, continued his labors of Sisyphus without the despair that made early days so bitter. And yet—like every soul in Paris—he cherished a dream. Rémonencq was happy in his dream; La Cibot had a dream of her own; and Dr. Poulain too dreamed. Some day he would be called in to attend a rich and influential patient, would effect a positive cure, and the patient would procure a post for him; he would be head surgeon to a hospital, medical officer of a prison or police-court, or doctor to the boulevard theatres. He had come by his present appointment as doctor to the Mairie in this very way. La Cibot had called him in when the landlord of the house in the Rue de Normandie fell ill; he had treated the case with complete success; M. Pillerault, the patient, took an interest in the young doctor, called to thank him, and saw his carefully hidden poverty. Count Popinot, the cabinet minister, had married M. Pillerault's grandniece, and greatly respected her uncle; of him, therefore, M. Pillerault had asked for the post, which Poulain had now held for two years. That appointment and its meagre salary came just in time to prevent a desperate step; Poulain was thinking of emigration; and for a Frenchman, it is a kind of death to leave France.

Dr. Poulain went, you may be sure, to thank Count Popinot; but as Count Popinot's family physician was the celebrated Horace Bianchon, it was pretty clear that his chances of gaining a footing in that house were something of the slenderest. The poor doctor had fondly hoped for the patronage of a powerful cabinet minister, one of the twelve or fifteen cards which a cunning hand has been shuffling for sixteen years on the green baize of the council table, and now he dropped back again into his Marais, his old groping life among the poor and the small tradespeople, with the privilege of issuing certificates of death for a yearly stipend of twelve hundred francs.

Dr. Poulain had distinguished himself to some extent as a house-student; he was a prudent practitioner, and not without experience. His deaths caused no scandal; he had plenty of opportunities of studying all kinds of complaints *in anima vili*. Judge, therefore, of the spleen that he nourished! The expression of his countenance, lengthy and not too cheerful to begin with, at times was positively appalling. Set a Tartuffe's all-devouring eyes, and the sour humor of an Alceste in a sallow parchment visage, and try to imagine for yourself the gait, bearing, and expression of a man who thought himself as good a doctor as the illustrious Bianchon, and felt that he was held down in his narrow lot by an iron hand. He could not help comparing his receipts (ten francs a day if he was fortunate) with Bianchon's five or six hundred.

Are the hatreds and jealousies of democracy incomprehensible after this? Ambitious and continually thwarted, he could not reproach himself. He had once already tried his fortune by inventing a purgative pill, something like Morrison's, and intrusted the business operations to an old hospital chum, a house-student who afterward took a retail drug business; but, unluckily, the druggist, smitten with the charms of a ballet-dancer of the Ambigu-Comique, found himself at length in the bankruptcy court; and as the patent had been taken out in his name, his partner was literally without a remedy, and the important discovery enriched the purchaser of the business. The sometime house-student set sail for Mexico, that land of gold, taking poor Poulain's little savings with him; and, to add insult to injury, the opera-dancer treated him as an extortioner when he applied to her for his money.

Not a single rich patient had come to him since he had the luck to cure old M. Pillerault. Poulain made his rounds on foot, scouring the Marais like a lean cat, and obtained from two to forty sous out of a score of visits. The paying patient was a phenomenon about as rare as that anomalous fowl known as a "white blackbird" in all sublunary regions.

The briefless barrister, the doctor without a patient, are pre-eminently the two types of a decorous despair peculiar to this city of Paris; it is mute, dull despair in human form, dressed in a black coat and trousers with shining seams that recall the zinc on an attic roof, a glistening satin waistcoat, a hat preserved like a relic, a pair of old gloves, and a cotton shirt. The man is the incarnation of a melancholy poem, sombre as the secrets of the Conciergerie. Other kinds of poverty, the poverty of the artist—actor, painter, musician, or poet—are relieved and lightened by the artist's joviality, the reckless gayety of the Bohemian border country—the first stage of the journey to the Thebaïd of genius. But these two black-coated professions that go afoot through the street are brought continually in contact with disease and dishonor; they see nothing of human nature but its sores; in the forlorn first stages and beginnings of their career they eye competitors suspiciously and defiantly; concentrated dislike and ambition flashes out in glances like the breaking forth of hidden flames. Let two schoolfellows meet after twenty years, the rich man will avoid the poor; he does not recognize him, he is afraid even to glance into the gulf which Fate has set between him and the friend of other years. The one has been borne through life on the mettlesome steed called Fortune, or wafted on the golden clouds of success; the other has been making his way in underground Paris through the sewers, and bears the marks of his career upon him. How many a chum of old days turned aside at the sight of the doctor's greatcoat and waistcoat!

With this explanation, it should be easy to understand how Dr. Poulain came to lend himself so readily to the farce of La Cibot's illness and recovery. Greed of every kind, ambition of every nature, is not easy to hide. The doctor examined his patient, found that every organ was sound and healthy, admired the regularity of her pulse and the perfect ease of her movements; and as she continued to moan aloud, he saw that for some reason she found it convenient to lie at Death's door. The speedy cure of a serious imaginary dis-

ease was sure to cause a sensation in the neighborhood; the doctor would be talked about. He made up his mind at once. He talked of rupture and of taking it in time, and thought even worse of the case than La Cibot herself. The portress was plied with various remedies, and finally underwent a sham operation, crowned with complete success. Poulain repaired to the Arsenal Library, looked out a grotesque case in some of Desplein's records of extraordinary cures, and fitted the details to Mme. Cibot, modestly attributing the success of the treatment to the great surgeon, in whose steps (he said) he walked. Such is the impudence of beginners in Paris. Everything is made to serve as a ladder by which to climb upon the scene; and as everything, even the rungs of a ladder, will wear out in time, the new members of every profession are at a loss to find the right sort of wood of which to make steps for themselves.

There are moments when the Parisian is not propitious. He grows tired of raising pedestals, pouts like a spoiled child, and will have no more idols; or, to state it more accurately, Paris cannot always find a proper object for infatuation. Now and then the vein of genius gives out, and at such times the Parisian may turn supercilious; he is not always willing to bow down and gild mediocrity.

Mme. Cibot, entering in her usual unceremonious fashion, found the doctor and his mother at table, before a bowl of lamb's lettuce, the cheapest of all salad-stuffs. The dessert consisted of a thin wedge of Brie cheese flanked by a plate of specked foreign apples and a dish of mixed dry fruits, known as *quatre-mendiants*, in which the raisin-stalks were abundantly conspicuous.

"You can stay, mother," said the doctor, laying a hand on Mme. Poulain's arm; "this is Mme. Cibot, of whom I have told you."

"My respects to you, madame, and my duty to you, sir," said La Cibot, taking the chair which the doctor offered. "Ah! is this your mother, sir? She is very happy to have

a son who has such talent; he saved my life, madame, brought me back from the depths."

The widow, hearing Mme. Cibot praise her son in this way, thought her a delightful woman.

"I have just come to tell you that, between ourselves, poor M. Pons is doing very badly, sir, and I have something to say to you about him—"

"Let us go into the sitting-room," interrupted the doctor, and with a significant gesture he indicated the servant.

In the sitting-room La Cibot explained her position with regard to the pair of nutcrackers at very considerable length. She repeated the history of her loan with added embellishments, and gave a full account of the immense services rendered during the past ten years to MM. Pons and Schmucke. The two old men, to all appearance, could not exist without her motherly care. She posed as an angel; she told so many lies, one after another, watering them with her tears, that old Mme. Poulain was quite touched.

"You understand, my dear sir," she concluded, "that I really ought to know how far I can depend on M. Pons's intentions, supposing that he should die; not that I want him to die, for looking after those two innocents is my life, madame, you see; still, when one of them is gone I shall look after the other. For my own part, I was built by Nature to rival mothers. Without nobody to care for, nobody to take for a child, I don't know what I should do. . . . So if M. Poulain only would, he might do me a service for which I should be very grateful; and that is, to say a word to M. Pons for me. Goodness me! an annuity of a thousand francs, is that too much, I ask you? . . . To M. Schmucke it will be so much gained.—Our dear patient said that he should recommend me to the German, poor man; it is his idea, no doubt, that M. Schmucke should be his heir. But what is a man that cannot put two ideas together in French? And besides, he would be quite capable of going back to Germany, he will be in such despair over his friend's death—"

The doctor grew grave. "My dear Mme. Cibot," he said,

"this sort of thing does not in the least concern a doctor. I should not be allowed to exercise my profession if it was known that I interfered in the matter of my patients' testamentary dispositions. The law forbids a doctor to receive a legacy from a patient—"

"A stupid law! What is to hinder me from dividing my legacy with you?" La Cibot said immediately.

"I will go further," said the doctor; "my professional conscience will not permit me to speak to M. Pons of his death. In the first place, he is not so dangerously ill that there is any need to speak of it; and in the second, such talk coming from me might give a shock to the system that would do him real harm, and then his illness might terminate fatally—"

"I don't put on gloves to tell him to get his affairs in order," cried Mme. Cibot, "and he is none the worse for that. He is used to it. There is nothing to fear."

"Not a word more about it, my dear Mme. Cibot! These things are not within a doctor's province; it is a notary's business—"

"But, my dear M. Poulain, suppose that M. Pons of his own accord should ask you how he is, and whether he had better make his arrangements; then, would you refuse to tell him that if you want to get better it is an excellent plan to set everything in order? Then you might just slip in a little word for me—"

"Oh, if *he* talks of making his will, I certainly shall not dissuade him," said the doctor.

"Very well, that is settled. I came to thank you for your care of me," she added, as she slipped a folded paper containing three gold coins into the doctor's hand. "It is all I can do at the moment. Ah! my dear M. Poulain, if I were rich, you should be rich, you that are the image of Providence on earth.—Madame, you have an angel for a son."

La Cibot rose to her feet, Mme. Poulain bowed amiably, and the doctor went to the door with the visitor. Just then a sudden, lurid gleam of light flashed across the mind of this

Lady Macbeth of the streets. She saw clearly that the doctor was her accomplice—he had taken the fee for a sham illness.

"M. Poulain," she began, "how can you refuse to say a word or two to save me from want, when you helped me in the affair of my accident?"

The doctor felt that the devil had him by a hair, as the saying is; he felt, too, that the hair was being twisted round the pitiless red claw. Startled and afraid lest he should sell his honesty for such a trifle, he answered the diabolical suggestion by another no less diabolical.

"Listen, my dear Mme. Cibot," he said, as he drew her into his consulting-room. "I will now pay a debt of gratitude that I owe you for my appointment to the mairie—"

"We go shares?" she asked briskly.

"In what?"

"In the legacy."

"You do not know me," replied Dr. Poulain, drawing himself up like Valerius Publicola. "Let us have no more of that. I have a friend, an old schoolfellow of mine, a very intelligent young fellow; and we are so much the more intimate, because our lives have fallen out very much in the same way. He was studying law while I was studying medicine; and when I was a house-student, he was engrossing deeds in Maître Couture's office. His father was a shoemaker, and mine was a breeches-maker; he has not found any one to take much interest in his career, nor has he any capital; for, after all, capital is only to be had from sympathizers. He could only afford to buy a provincial connection—at Mantes—and so little do provincials understand the Parisian intellect, that they set all sorts of intrigues on foot against him."

"The wretches!" cried La Cibot.

"Yes," said the doctor. "They combined against him to such purpose, that they forced him to sell his connection by misrepresenting something that he had done; the attorney for the crown interfered, he belonged to the place, and sided

with his fellow-townsmen. My friend's name is Fraisier. He is lodged as I am, and he is even leaner and more threadbare. He took refuge in our arrondissement, and is reduced to appear for clients in the police-court or before the magistrate. He lives in the Rue de la Perle close by. Go to number 9, third floor, and you will see his name on the door on the landing, painted in gilt letters on a small square of red leather. Fraisier makes a special point of disputes among the porters, workmen, and poor folk in the arrondissement, and his charges are low. He is an honest man; for I need not tell you that if he had been a scamp he would be keeping his carriage by now. I will call and see my friend Fraisier this evening. Go to him early to-morrow; he knows M. Louchard, the bailiff; M. Tabareau, the clerk of the court; and the justice of the peace, M. Vitel; and M. Trognon, the notary. He is even now looked upon as one of the best men of business in the Quarter. If he takes charge of your interests, if you can secure him as M. Pons's adviser, you will have a second self in him, you see. But do not make dishonorable proposals to him, as you did just now to me; he has a head on his shoulders, you will understand each other. And as for acknowledging his services, I will be your intermediary—"

Mme. Cibot looked askance at the doctor.

"Is that the lawyer who helped Mme. Florimond the haberdasher in the Rue Vieille-du-Temple out of a fix in that matter of her friend's legacy?"

"The very same."

"Wasn't it a shame that she did not marry him after he had gained two thousand francs a year for her?" exclaimed La Cibot. "And she thought to clear off scores by making him a present of a dozen shirts and a couple of dozen pocket-handkerchiefs; an outfit, in short."

"My dear Mme. Cibot, that outfit cost a thousand francs, and Fraisier was just setting up for himself in the Quarter, and wanted the things very badly. And what was more, she paid the bill without asking any questions. That affair

brought him clients, and now he is very busy; but in my line a practice brings—”

“It is only the righteous that suffer here below,” said La Cibot. “Well, M. Poulain, good-day and thank you.”

And herewith begins the tragedy, or, if you like to have it so, a terrible comedy—the death of an old bachelor delivered over by circumstances too strong for him to the rapacity and greed that gathered about his bed. And other forces came to the support of rapacity and greed; there was the picture collector’s mania, that most intense of all passions; there was the cupidity of the *Sieur Fraisier*, whom you shall presently behold in his den, a sight to make you shudder; and lastly, there was the *Auvergnat* thirsting for money, ready for anything—even for a crime—that should bring him the capital he wanted. The first part of the story serves in some sort as a prelude to this comedy in which all the actors who have hitherto occupied the stage will reappear.

The degradation of a word is one of those curious freaks of manners upon which whole volumes of explanation might be written. Write to an attorney and address him as “*Lawyer So-and-so*,” and you insult him as surely as you would insult a wholesale colonial produce merchant by addressing your letter to “*Mr. So-and-so, Grocer*.” There are plenty of men of the world who ought to be aware, since the knowledge of such subtle distinctions is their province, that you cannot insult a French writer more cruelly than by calling him *un homme de lettres*—a literary man. The word *monsieur* is a capital example of the life and death of words. Abbreviated from *monseigneur*, once so considerable a title, and even now, in the form of *sire*, reserved for emperors and kings, it is bestowed indifferently upon all and sundry; while the twin-word *messire*, which is nothing but its double and equivalent, if by any chance it slips into a certificate of burial, produces an outcry in the Republican papers.

Magistrates, councillors, jurisconsults, judges, barristers, officers for the crown, bailiffs, attorneys, clerks of the court, procurators, solicitors, and agents of various kinds, represent

or misrepresent Justice. The "lawyer" and the bailiff's men (commonly called "the brokers") are the two lowest rungs of the ladder. Now, the bailiff's man is an outsider, an adventitious minister of justice, appearing to see that judgment is executed; he is, in fact, a kind of inferior executioner employed by the county court. But the word "lawyer" (*homme de loi*) is a depreciatory term applied to the legal profession. Consuming professional jealousy finds similar disparaging epithets for fellow-travellers in every walk in life, and every calling has its special insult. The scorn flung into the words *homme de loi*, *homme de lettres*, is wanting in the plural form, which may be used without offence; but in Paris every profession, learned or unlearned, has its *omega*, the individual who brings it down to the level of the lowest class; and the written law has its connecting link with the custom right of the streets. There are districts where the pettifogging man of business, known as Lawyer So-and-so, is still to be found. M. Fraasier was to the member of the Incorporated Law Society as the money-lender of the Halles, offering small loans for a short period at an exorbitant interest, is to the great capitalist.

Working people, strange to say, are as shy of officials as of fashionable restaurants, they take advice from irregular sources as they turn into a little wineshop to drink. Each rank in life finds its own level, and there abides. None but a chosen few care to climb the heights, few can feel at ease in the presence of their betters, or take their place among them, like a Beaumarchais letting fall the watch of the great lord who tried to humiliate him. And if there are few who can even rise to a higher social level, those among them who can throw off their swaddling-clothes are rare and great exceptions.

At six o'clock the next morning Mme. Cibot stood in the Rue de la Perle; she was making a survey of the abode of her future adviser, Lawyer Fraasier. The house was one of the old-fashioned kind formerly inhabited by small tradespeople

and citizens with small means. A cabinet-maker's shop occupied almost the whole of the ground floor, as well as the little yard behind, which was covered with his workshops and warehouses; the small remaining space being taken up by the porter's lodge and the passage entry in the middle. The staircase walls were half rotten with damp and covered with saltpetre to such a degree that the house seemed to be stricken with leprosy.

Mme. Cibot went straight to the porter's lodge, and there encountered one of the fraternity, a shoemaker, his wife, and two small children, all housed in a room ten feet square, lighted from the yard at the back. La Cibot mentioned her profession, named herself, and spoke of her house in the Rue de Normandie, and the two women were on cordial terms at once. After a quarter of an hour spent in gossip while the shoemaker's wife made breakfast ready for her husband and the children, Mme. Cibot turned the conversation to the subject of the lodgers, and spoke of the lawyer.

"I have come to see him on business," she said. "One of his friends, Dr. Poulain, recommended me to him. Do you know Dr. Poulain?"

"I should think I do," said the lady of the Rue de la Perle. "He saved my little girl's life when she had the croup."

"He saved my life too, madame. What sort of man is this M. Fraasier?"

"He is the sort of man, my dear lady, out of whom it is very difficult to get the postage-money at the end of the month."

To a person of La Cibot's intelligence this was enough.

"One may be poor and honest," observed she.

"I am sure I hope so," returned Fraasier's portress. "We are not rolling in coppers, let alone gold or silver; but we have not a farthing belonging to anybody else."

This sort of talk sounded familiar to La Cibot.

"In short, one can trust him, child, eh?"

"Lord! when M. Fraasier means well by any one, there is not his like, so I have heard Mme. Florimond say."

"And why didn't she marry him when she owed her fortune to him?" La Cibot asked quickly. "It is something for a little haberdasher, kept by an old man, to be a barrister's wife—"

"Why?—" asked the portress, bringing Mme. Cibot out into the passage. "Why?— You are going up to see him, are you not, madame?—Very well, when you are in his office you will know why."

From the state of the staircase, lighted by sash-windows on the side of the yard, it was pretty evident that the inmates of the house, with the exception of the landlord and M. Fraasier himself, were all workmen. There were traces of various crafts in the deposit of mud upon the steps—brass-filings, broken buttons, scraps of gauze, and esparto grass lay scattered about. The walls of the upper stories were covered with apprentices' ribald scrawls and caricatures. The portress's last remark had roused La Cibot's curiosity; she decided, not unnaturally, that she would consult Dr. Poulain's friend; but as for employing him, that must depend upon her impressions.

"I sometimes wonder how Mme. Sauvage can stop in his service," said the portress, by way of comment; she was following in Mme. Cibot's wake. "I will come up with you, madame," she added; "I am taking the milk and the newspaper up to my landlord."

Arrived on the second floor above the entresol, La Cibot beheld a door of the most villanous description. The doubtful red paint was coated for seven or eight inches round the keyhole with a filthy glaze, a grimy deposit from which the modern house-decorator endeavors to protect the doors of more elegant apartments by glass "finger-plates." A grating, almost stopped up with some compound similar to the deposit with which a restaurant-keeper gives an air of cellar-bound antiquity to a merely middle-aged bottle, only served to heighten the general resemblance to a prison door; a resemblance further heightened by the trefoil-shaped ironwork, the formidable hinges, the clumsy nail-heads. A miser, or

a pamphleteer at strife with the world at large, must surely have invented these fortifications. A leaden sink, which received the waste water of the household, contributed its quota to the fetid atmosphere of the staircase, and the ceiling was covered with fantastic arabesques traced by candle-smoke—such arabesques! On pulling a greasy acorn tassel attached to the bell-rope, a little bell jangled feebly somewhere within, complaining of the fissure in its metal sides.

Every detail was in keeping with the general dismal effect. La Cibot heard a heavy footstep, and the asthmatic wheezing of a virago within, and Mme. Sauvage presently showed herself. Adrien Brauwer might have painted just such a hag for his picture of "Witches starting for the Sabbath"; a stout, unwholesome slattern, five feet six inches in height, with a grenadier countenance and a beard which far surpassed La Cibot's own; she wore a cheap, hideously ugly cotton gown, a bandanna handkerchief knotted over hair which she still continued to put in curl-papers (using for that purpose the printed circulars which her master received), and a huge pair of gold earrings like cart-wheels in her ears. This female Cerberus carried a battered skillet in one hand, and opening the door, set free an imprisoned odor of scorched milk—a nauseous and penetrating smell that lost itself at once, however, among the fumes outside.

"What can I do for you, missus?" demanded Mme. Sauvage, and with a truculent air she looked La Cibot over; evidently she was of the opinion that the visitor was too well dressed, and her eyes looked the more murderous because they were naturally bloodshot.

"I have come to see M. Fraasier; his friend, Dr. Poulain, sent me."

"Oh! come in, missus," said La Sauvage, grown very amiable all of a sudden, which proves that she was prepared for this morning visit.

With a sweeping courtesy, the stalwart woman flung open the door of a private office, which looked upon the street, and discovered the ex-attorney of Mantes.

The room was a complete picture of a third-rate solicitor's office; with the stained wooden cases, the letter-files so old that they had grown beards (in ecclesiastical language), the red tape dangling limp and dejected, the pasteboard boxes covered with traces of the gambols of mice, the dirty floor, the ceiling tawny with smoke. A frugal allowance of wood was smouldering on a couple of fire-dogs on the hearth. And on the chimney-piece above stood a foggy mirror and a modern clock with an inlaid wooden case; Fraisier had picked it up at an execution sale, together with the tawdry imitation rococo candlesticks, with the zinc beneath showing through the lacquer in several places.

M. Fraisier was small, thin, and unwholesome looking; his red face, covered with an eruption, told of tainted blood; and he had, moreover, a trick of continually scratching his right arm. A wig pushed to the back of his head displayed a brick-colored cranium of ominous conformation. This person rose from a cane-seated armchair, in which he sat on a green leather cushion, assumed an agreeable expression, and brought forward a chair.

"Mme. Cibot, I believe?" queried he, in dulcet tones.

"Yes, sir," answered the portress. She had lost her habitual assurance.

Something in the tones of a voice which strongly resembled the sounds of the little door-bell, something in a glance even sharper than the sharp green eyes of her future legal adviser, scared Mme. Cibot. Fraisier's presence so pervaded the room that any one might have thought there was pestilence in the air; and in a flash Mme. Cibot understood why Mme. Florimond had not become Mme. Fraisier.

"Poulain told me about you, my dear madame," said the lawyer, in the unnatural fashion commonly described by the words "mincing tones"; tones sharp, thin, and grating as verjuice, in spite of all his efforts.

Arrived at this point, he tried to draw the skirts of his dressing-gown over a pair of angular knees incased in threadbare felt. The robe was an ancient printed cotton garment,

lined with wadding which took the liberty of protruding itself through various slits in it here and there; the weight of this lining had pulled the skirts aside, disclosing a dingy-hued flannel waistcoat beneath. With something of a coxcomb's manner, Fraasier fastened this refractory article of dress, tightening the girdle to define his reedy figure; then with a blow of the tongs he effected a reconciliation between two burning brands that had long avoided one another, like brothers after a family quarrel. A sudden bright idea struck him, and he rose from his chair.

"Mme. Sauvage!" called he.

"Well?"

"I am not at home to anybody!"

"Eh! bless your life, there's no need to say that!"

"She is my old nurse," the lawyer said in some confusion.

"And she has not recovered her figure yet," remarked the heroine of the Halles.

Fraasier laughed, and drew the bolt lest his housekeeper should interrupt Mme. Cibot's confidences.

"Well, madame, explain your business," said he, making another effort to drape himself in the dressing-gown. "Any one recommended to me by the only friend I have in the world may count upon me—I may say—absolutely."

For half an hour Mme. Cibot talked, and the man of law made no interruption of any sort; his face wore the expression of curious interest with which a young soldier listens to a pensioner of "The Old Guard." Fraasier's silence and acquiescence, the rapt attention with which he appeared to listen to a torrent of gossip similar to the samples previously given, dispelled some of the prejudices inspired in La Cibot's mind by his squalid surroundings. The little lawyer with the black-speckled green eyes was in reality making a study of his client. When at length she came to a stand and looked to him to speak, he was seized with a fit of the complaint known as a "churchyard cough," and had recourse to an earthenware basin half full of herb tea, which he drained.

"But for Poulain, my dear madame, I should have been

dead before this," said Fraasier, by way of answer to the portress's looks of motherly compassion; "but he will bring me round, he says—"

As all the client's confidences appeared to have slipped from the memory of her legal adviser, she began to cast about for a way of taking leave of a man so apparently near death.

"In an affair of this kind, madame," continued the attorney from Mantes, suddenly returning to business, "there are two things which it is most important to know. In the first place, whether the property is sufficient to be worth troubling about; and, in the second, who the next-of-kin may be; for if the property is the booty, the next-of-kin is the enemy."

La Cibot immediately began to talk of Rémonencq and Elie Magus, and said that the shrewd couple valued the pictures at six hundred thousand francs.

"Would they take them themselves at that price?" inquired the lawyer. "You see, madame, that men of business are shy of pictures. A picture may mean a piece of canvas worth a couple of francs or a painting worth two hundred thousand. Now paintings worth two hundred thousand francs are usually well known; and what errors in judgment people make in estimating even the most famous pictures of all! There was once a great capitalist whose collection was admired, visited, and engraved—actually engraved! He was supposed to have spent millions of francs on it. He died, as men must; and—well, his *genuine* pictures did not fetch more than two hundred thousand francs! You must let me see these gentlemen.—Now for the next-of-kin," and Fraasier again relapsed into his attitude of listener.

When President Camusot's name came up, he nodded with a grimace which riveted Mme. Cibot's attention. She tried to read the forehead and the villanous face, and found what is called in business a "wooden head."

"Yes, my dear sir," repeated La Cibot. "Yes, my M. Pons is own cousin to President Camusot de Marville; he

tells me that ten times a day. M. Camusot the silk mercer was married twice—”

“He that has just been nominated for a peer of France?—”

“—And his first wife was a Mlle. Pons, M. Pons’s first cousin.”

“Then they are first cousins once removed—”

“They are ‘not cousins.’ They have quarrelled.”

It may be remembered that, before M. Camusot de Marville came to Paris, he was President of the Tribunal of Mantes for five years; and not only was his name still remembered there, but he had kept up a correspondence with Mantes. Camusot’s immediate successor, the judge with whom he had been most intimate during his term of office, was still President of the Tribunal, and consequently knew all about Fraasier.

“Do you know, madame,” Fraasier said, when at last the red sluices of La Cibot’s torrent tongue were closed, “do you know that your principal enemy will be a man who can send you to the scaffold?”

The portress started on her chair, making a sudden spring like a jack-in-the-box.

“Calm yourself, dear madame,” continued Fraasier. “You may not have known the name of the President of the Chamber of Indictments at the Court of Appeal in Paris; but you ought to have known that M. Pons must have an heir-at-law. M. le Président de Marville is your invalid’s sole heir; but as he is a collateral in the third degree, M. Pons is entitled by law to leave his fortune as he pleases. You are not aware either that, six weeks ago at least, M. le Président’s daughter married the eldest son of M. le Comte Popinot, peer of France, once Minister of Agriculture, and President of the Board of Trade, one of the most influential politicians of the day. President de Marville is even more formidable through this marriage than in his own quality of head of the Court of Assize.”

At that word La Cibot shuddered.

"Yes, and it is he who sends you there," continued Fraasier. "Ah! my dear madame, you little know what a red robe means! It is bad enough to have a plain black gown against you! You see me here, ruined, bald, broken in health—all because, unwittingly, I crossed a mere attorney for the crown in the provinces. I was forced to sell my connection at a loss, and very lucky I was to come off with the loss of my money. If I had tried to stand out, my professional position would have gone as well.

"One thing more you do not know," he continued, "and this it is. If you had only to do with President Camusot himself, it would be nothing; but he has a wife, mind you!—and if you ever find yourself face to face with that wife, you will shake in your shoes as if you were on the first step of the scaffold, your hair will stand on end. The *Présidente* is so vindictive that she would spend ten years over setting a trap to kill you. She sets that husband of hers spinning like a top. Through her a charming young fellow committed suicide at the *Conciergerie*. A count was accused of forgery—she made his character as white as snow. She all but drove a person of the highest quality from the Court of Charles X. Finally, she displaced the Attorney-General, M. de Granville—"

"That lived in the Rue Vieille-du-Temple, at the corner of the Rue Saint-François?"

"The very same. They say that she means to make her husband Home Secretary, and I do not know that she will not gain her end.—If she were to take it into her head to send us both to the Criminal Court first and the hulks afterward—I should apply for a passport and set sail for America, though I am as innocent as a newborn babe. So well I know what justice means. Now, see here, my dear Mme. Cibot; to marry her only daughter to young Vicomte Popinot (heir to M. Pillerault your landlord, it is said)—to make that match, she stripped herself of her whole fortune, so much so that the President and his wife have nothing at this moment except his official salary. Can you suppose,

my dear madame, that under the circumstances Mme. la Présidente will let M. Pons's property go out of the family without a word?—Why, I would sooner face guns loaded with grapeshot than have such a woman for my enemy—”

“But they have quarrelled,” put in La Cibot.

“What has that to do with it?” asked Fraasier. “It is one reason the more for fearing her. To kill a relative of whom you are tired is something; but to inherit his property afterward—that is a real pleasure!”

“But the old gentleman has a horror of his relatives. He says over and over again that these people—M. Cardot, M. Berthier, and the rest of them (I can remember their names)—have crushed him as a tumbrel cart crushes an egg—”

“Have you a mind to be crushed too?”

“Oh dear! oh dear!” cried La Cibot. “Ah! Ma'am Fontaine was right when she said that I should meet with difficulties; still, she said that I should succeed—”

“Listen, my dear Mme. Cibot.—As for making some thirty thousand francs out of this business—that is possible; but for the whole of the property, it is useless to think of it. We talked over your case yesterday evening, Dr. Poulain and I—”

La Cibot started again.

“Well, what is the matter?”

“But if you knew about the affair, why did you let me chatter away like a magpie?”

“Mme. Cibot, I knew all about your business, but I knew nothing of Mme. Cibot. So many clients, so many characters—”

Mme. Cibot gave her legal adviser a queer look at this; all her suspicions gleamed in her eyes. Fraasier saw this.

“I resume,” he continued. “So, our friend Poulain was once called in by you to attend old M. Pillerault, the Countess Popinot's great-uncle; that is one of your claims to my devotion. Poulain goes to see your landlord (mark this!) once a fortnight; he learned all these particulars from him.

M. Pillerault was present at his grandnephew's wedding—for he is an uncle with money to leave; he has an income of fifteen thousand francs, though he has lived like a hermit for the last five-and-twenty years, and scarcely spends a thousand crowns—well, *he* told Poulain all about this marriage. It seems that your old musician was precisely the cause of the row; he tried to disgrace his own family by way of revenge.—If you only hear one bell, you only hear one sound.—Your invalid says that he meant no harm, but everybody thinks him a monster of—”

“And it would not astonish me if he was!” cried La Cibot. “Just imagine it!—For these ten years past I have been money out of pocket for him, spending my savings on him, and he knows it, and yet he will not let me lie down to sleep on a legacy!—No, sir! he will *not*. He is obstinate, a regular mule he is.—I have talked to him these ten days, and the cross-grained cur won't stir no more than a sign-post. He shuts his teeth and looks at me like— The most that he would say was that he would recommend me to M. Schmucke.”

“Then he means to make his will in favor of this Schmucke?”

“Everything will go to him—”

“Listen, my dear Mme. Cibot, if I am to arrive at any definite conclusions and think of a plan, I must know M. Schmucke. I must see the property and have some talk with this Jew of whom you speak; and then, let me direct you—”

“We shall see, M. Fraasier.”

“What is this? ‘We shall see?’” repeated Fraasier, speaking in the voice natural to him, as he gave La Cibot a viperous glance. “Am I your legal adviser or am I not, I say? Let us know exactly where we stand.”

La Cibot felt that he read her thoughts. A cold chill ran down her back.

“I have told you all I know,” she said. She saw that she was at the tiger's mercy.

"We attorneys are accustomed to treachery. Just think carefully over your position; it is superb.—If you follow my advice point by point, you will have thirty or forty thousand francs. But there is a reverse side to this beautiful medal. How if the *Présidente* comes to hear that M. Pons's property is worth a million of francs, and that you mean to have a bite out of it?—for there is always somebody ready to take that kind of errand—" he added parenthetically.

This remark, and the little pause that came before and after it, sent another shudder through La Cibot. She thought at once that Fraasier himself would probably undertake that office.

"And then, my dear client, in ten minutes old Pillerault is asked to dismiss you, and then on a couple of hours' notice—"

"What does that matter to me?" said La Cibot, rising to her feet like a Bellona; "I shall stay with the gentlemen as their housekeeper."

"And then, a trap will be set for you, and some fine morning you and your husband will wake up in a prison cell, to be tried for your lives—"

"*I?*" cried La Cibot, "I that have not a farthing that doesn't belong to me. . . . *II* . . . *II*!"

For five minutes she held forth, and Fraasier watched the great artist before him as she executed a concerto of self-praise. He was quite untouched, and even amused by the performance. His keen glances pricked La Cibot like stilettoes; he chuckled inwardly, till his shrunken wig was shaking with laughter. He was a Robespierre at an age when the Sylla of France was still making couplets.

"And how? And why? And on what pretext?" demanded she, when she came to an end.

"You wish to know how you may come to the guillotine?"

La Cibot turned pale as death at the words; the words fell like the knife upon her neck. She stared wildly at Fraasier.

"Listen to me, my dear child," began Fraasier, suppressing his inward satisfaction at his client's discomfiture.

"I would sooner leave things as they are—" murmured La Cibot, and she rose to go.

"Stay," Fraasier said imperiously. "You ought to know the risks that you are running; I am bound to give you the benefit of my lights.—You are dismissed by M. Pillerault, we will say; there is no doubt about that, is there? You enter the service of these two gentlemen. Very good! That is a declaration of war against the *Présidente*. You mean to do everything you can to gain possession of the property, and to get a slice out of it at any rate—

"Oh, I am not blaming you," Fraasier continued, in answer to a gesture from his client. "It is not my place to do so. This is a battle, and you will be led on further than you think for. One grows full of one's idea, one hits hard—"

Another gesture of denial. This time La Cibot tossed her head.

"There, there, old lady," said Fraasier, with odious familiarity, "you will go a very long way!—"

"You take me for a thief, I suppose?"

"Come, now, mamma, you hold a receipt in M. Schmucke's hand which did not cost you much.—Ah! you are in the confessional, my lady. Don't deceive your confessor, especially when the confessor has the power of reading your thoughts."

La Cibot was dismayed by the man's perspicacity; now she knew why he had listened to her so intently.

"Very good," continued he, "you can admit at once that the *Présidente* will not allow you to pass her in the race for the property.—You will be watched and spied upon.—You get your name into M. Pons's will; nothing could be better. But some fine day the law steps in, arsenic is found in a glass, and you and your husband are arrested, tried, and condemned for attempting the life of the *Sieur Pons*, so as to come by your legacy. I once defended a poor woman at Versailles; she was in reality as innocent as you would

be in such a case. Things were as I have told you, and all that I could do was to save her life. The unhappy creature was sentenced to twenty years' penal servitude. She is working out her time now at St. Lazare."

Mme. Cibot's terror grew to the highest pitch. She grew paler and paler, staring at the little, thin man with the green eyes, as some wretched Moor, accused of adhering to her own religion, might gaze at the inquisitor who doomed her to the stake.

"Then do you tell me that if I leave you to act, and put my interests in your hands, I shall get something without fear?"

"I guarantee you thirty thousand francs," said Fraasier, speaking like a man sure of the fact.

"After all, you know how fond I am of dear Dr. Poulain," she began again in her most coaxing tones; "he told me to come to you, worthy man, and he did not send me here to be told that I shall be guillotined for poisoning some one."

The thought of the guillotine so moved her that she burst into tears, her nerves were shaken, terror clutched at her heart, she lost her head. Fraasier gloated over his triumph. When he saw his client hesitate, he thought that he had lost his chance; he had set himself to frighten and quell La Cibot till she was completely in his power, bound hand and foot. She had walked into his study as a fly walks into a spider's web; there she was doomed to remain, entangled in the toils of the little lawyer who meant to feed upon her. Out of this bit of business, indeed, Fraasier meant to gain the living of old days; comfort, competence, and consideration. He and his friend Dr. Poulain had spent the whole previous evening in a microscopic examination of the case; they had made mature deliberations. The doctor described Schmucke for his friend's benefit, and the alert pair had plumbed all hypotheses and scrutinized all risks and resources, till Fraasier, exultant, cried aloud, "Both our fortunes lie in this!" He had gone so far as to promise Poulain a hospital, and as for

himself, he meant to be justice of the peace of an *arrondissement*.

To be a justice of the peace! For this man with his abundant capacity, for this doctor of law without a pair of socks to his name, the dream was a hippogriff so restive that he thought of it as a deputy-advocate thinks of the silk gown, as an Italian priest thinks of the tiara. It was indeed a wild dream!

M. Vitel, the justice of the peace before whom Fraasier pleaded, was a man of sixty-nine, in failing health; he talked of retiring on a pension; and Fraasier used to talk with Poulain of succeeding him, much as Poulain talked of saving the life of some rich heiress and marrying her afterward. No one knows how greedily every post in the gift of authority is sought after in Paris. Every one wants to live in Paris. If a stamp or tobacco license falls in, a hundred women rise up as one and stir all their friends to obtain it. Any vacancy in the ranks of the twenty-four collectors of taxes sends a flood of ambitious folk surging in upon the Chamber of Deputies. Decisions are made in committee, all appointments are made by the Government. Now the salary of a justice of the peace, the lowest stipendiary magistrate in Paris, is about six thousand francs. The post of registrar to the court is worth a hundred thousand francs. Few places are more coveted in the administration. Fraasier, as a justice of the peace, with the head physician of a hospital for his friend, would make a rich marriage himself and a good match for Dr. Poulain. Each would lend a hand to each.

Night set its leaden seal upon the plans made by the sometime attorney of Mantes, and a formidable scheme sprouted up, a flourishing scheme, fertile in harvests of gain and intrigue. La Cibot was the hinge upon which the whole matter turned; and for this reason, any rebellion on the part of the instrument must be at once put down; such action on her part was quite unexpected; but Fraasier had put forth all the strength of his rancorous nature, and the audacious portress lay trampled under his feet.

"Come, reassure yourself, my dear madame," he remarked, holding out his hand. The touch of the cold serpent-like skin made a terrible impression upon the portress. It brought about something like a physical reaction, which checked her emotion; Mme. Fontaine's toad, Astaroth, seemed to her to be less deadly than this poison-sac that wore a sandy wig and spoke in tones like the creaking of a hinge.

"Do not imagine that I am frightening you to no purpose," Fraisier continued. (La Cibot's feeling of repulsion had not escaped him.) "The affairs which made Mme. la Présidente's dreadful reputation are so well known at the law-courts that you can make inquiries there if you like. The great person who was all but sent into a lunatic asylum was the Marquis d'Espard. The Marquis d'Esgrignon was saved from the hulks. The handsome young man with wealth and a great future before him, who was to have married a daughter of one of the first families of France, and hanged himself in a cell of the Conciergerie, was the celebrated Lucien de Rubempré; the affair made a great deal of noise in Paris at the time. That was a question of a will. His mistress, the notorious Esther, died and left him several millions, and they accused the young fellow of poisoning her. He was not even in Paris at the time of her death, nor did he so much as know that the woman had left the money to him!—One cannot well be more innocent than that! Well, after M. Camusot examined him, he hanged himself in his cell. Law, like medicine, has its victims. In the first case, one man suffers for the many, and in the second, he dies for science," he added, and an ugly smile stole over his lips. "Well, I know the risks myself, you see; poor and obscure little attorney as I am, the law has been the ruin of me. My experience was dearly bought—it is all at your service."

"Thank you, no," said La Cibot; "I will have nothing to do with it, upon my word! . . . I shall have nourished ingratitude, that is all! I want nothing but my due; I have thirty years of honesty behind me, sir. M. Pons says that he will recommend me to his friend Schmucke; well and

good, I shall end my days in peace with the German, good man."

Fraisier had overshot his mark. He had discouraged La Cibot. Now he was obliged to remove these unpleasant impressions.

"Do not let us give up," he said; "just go away quietly home. Come, now, we will steer the affair to a good end."

"But what about my *rentes*, what am I to do to get them, and—"

"And feel no remorse?" he interrupted quickly. "Eh! it is precisely for that that men of business were invented; unless you keep within the law, you get nothing. You know nothing of law; I know a good deal. I will see that you keep on the right side of it, and you can hold your own in all men's sight. As for your conscience, that is your own affair."

"Very well, tell me how to do it," returned La Cibot, curious and delighted.

"I do not know how yet. I have not looked at the strong points of the case yet; I have been busy with the obstacles. But the first thing to be done is to urge him to make a will; you cannot go wrong over that; and find out, first of all, how Pons means to leave his fortune; for if you were his heir—"

"No, no; he does not like me. Ah! if I had but known the value of his gimeracks, and if I had known what I know now about his amours, I should be easy in my mind this day—"

"Keep on, in fact," broke in Fraisier. "Dying folk have queer fancies, my dear madame; they disappoint hopes many a time. Let him make his will, and then we shall see. And of all things, the property must be valued. So I must see this Rémonencq and the Jew; they will be very useful to us. Put entire confidence in me, I am at your disposal. When a client is a friend to me, I am his friend through thick and thin. Friend or enemy, that is my character."

"Very well," said La Cibot, "I am yours entirely; and as for fees, M. Poulain—"

"Let us say nothing about that," said Fraasier. "Think how you can keep Poulain at the bedside; he is one of the most upright and conscientious men I know; and, you see, we want some one there whom we can trust. Poulain would do better than I; I have lost my character."

"You look as if you had," said La Cibot; "but, for my own part, I should trust you."

"And you would do well. Come to see me whenever anything happens, and—there!—you are an intelligent woman; all will go well."

"Good-day, M. Fraasier. I hope you will recover your health. Your servant, sir."

Fraasier went to the door with his client. But this time it was he, and not La Cibot, who was struck with an idea on the threshold.

"If you could persuade M. Pons to call me in, it would be a great step."

"I will try," said La Cibot.

Fraasier drew her back into his sanctum. "Look here, old lady, I know M. Trognon, the notary of the quarter, very well. If M. Pons has not a notary, mention M. Trognon to him. Make him take M. Trognon—"

"Right," returned La Cibot.

And as she came out again she heard the rustle of a dress and the sound of a stealthy, heavy footstep.

Out in the street and by herself, Mme. Cibot to some extent recovered her liberty of mind as she walked. Though the influence of the conversation was still upon her, and she had always stood in dread of scaffolds, justice, and judges, she took a very natural resolution which was to bring about a conflict of strategy between her and her formidable legal adviser.

"What do I want with other folk?" said she to herself. "Let us make a round sum, and afterward I will take all that they offer me to push their interests"; and this thought, as will shortly be seen, hastened the poor old musician's end.

"Well, dear M. Schmucke, and how is our dear, adored patient?" asked La Cibot, as she came into the room.

"Fery pad; Bons haf been vandering all der night."

"Then, what did he say?"

"Chust nonsense. He vould dot I haf all his fortune, on kondition dot I sell nodings.—Den he cried! Boor mann! It made me ver' sad."

"Never mind, honey," returned the portress. "I have kept you waiting for your breakfast; it is nine o'clock and past; but don't scold me. I have business on hand, you see, business of yours. Here are we without any money, and I have been out to get some."

"Vere?" asked Schmucke.

"Of my uncle."

"Onkel?"

"Up the spout."

"Shpout?"

"Oh! the dear man! how simple he is? No, you are a saint, a love, an archbishop of innocence, a man that ought to be stuffed, as the old actor said. What! you have lived in Paris for twenty-nine years; you saw the Revolution of July, you did, and you have never so much as heard tell of a pawnbroker—a man that loans you money on your things?—I have been pawning our silver spoons and forks, eight of them, thread pattern. Pooh, Cibot can eat his victuals with German silver; it is quite the fashion now, they say. It is not worth while to say anything to our angel there; it would upset him and make him yellower than before, and he is quite cross enough as it is. Let us get him round against first, and afterward we shall see. What must be must; and we must take things as we find them, eh?"

"Goot voman! nople heart!" cried poor Schmucke, with a great tenderness in his face. He took La Cibot's hand and clasped it to his breast. When he looked up, there were tears in his eyes.

"There, that will do, Papa Schmucke; how funny you

are! This is too bad. I'm an old daughter of the people—my heart is in my hand. I have something *here*, you see, like you have, hearts of gold that you are," she added, slapping her chest.

"Baba Schmucke!" continued the musician. "No. To know de tephths of sorrow, to cry mit tears of blood, to mount up in der hefn—dat is mein lot! I shall not lif after Pons—"

"Gracious! I am sure you won't, you are killing yourself.—Listen, pet!"

"Bet?"

"Very well, my sonny—"

"Zonny?"

"My lamb, then, if you like it better."

"It is not more clear."

"Oh, well, let *me* take care of you and tell you what to do; for if you go on like this, I shall have both of you laid up on my hands, you see. To my little way of thinking, we must do the work between us. You cannot go about Paris to give lessons, for it tires you, and then you are not fit to do anything afterward, and somebody must sit up of a night with M. Pons, now that he is getting worse and worse. I will run round to-day to all your pupils and tell them that you are ill; is it not so? And then you can spend the nights with our lamb, and sleep of a morning from five o'clock till, let us say, two in the afternoon. I myself will take the day, the most tiring part, for there is your breakfast and dinner to get ready, and the bed to make, and the things to change, and the doses of medicine to give. I could not hold out for another ten days at this rate. It is a month and more already since I have been like this. What would become of you if I were to fall ill? And you yourself, it makes one shudder to see you; just look at yourself, after sitting up with him last night!"

She drew Schmucke to the glass, and Schmucke thought that there was a great change.

"So, if you are of my mind, I'll have your breakfast ready in a jiffy. Then you will look after our poor dear

again till two o'clock. Let me have a list of your people, and I will soon arrange it. You will be free for a fortnight. You can go to bed when I come in, and sleep till night."

So prudent did the proposition seem, that Schmucke then and there agreed to it.

"Not a word to M. Pons; he would think it was all over with him, you know, if we were to tell him in this way that his engagement at the theatre and his lessons are put off. He would be thinking that he should not find his pupils again, poor gentleman—stuff and nonsense! M. Poulain says that we shall save our Benjamin if we keep him as quiet as possible."

"Ach! fery goot! Pring up der breakfast; I shall make der bett, and gif you die attresses!—You are right; it would be too much for me."

An hour later La Cibot, in her Sunday clothes, departed in great state, to the no small astonishment of the Rémonencqs; she promised herself that she would support the character of confidential servant of the pair of nutcrackers, in the boarding-schools and private families in which they gave music-lessons.

It is needless to repeat all the gossip in which La Cibot indulged on her round. The members of every family, the head-mistress of every boarding-school, were treated to a variation upon the theme of Pons's illness. A single scene, which took place in the Illustrious Gaudissart's private room, will give a sufficient idea of the rest. La Cibot met with unheard-of difficulties, but she succeeded in penetrating at last to the presence. Kings and cabinet ministers are less difficult of access than the manager of a theatre in Paris; nor is it hard to understand why such prodigious barriers are raised between them and ordinary mortals: a king has only to defend himself from ambition; the manager of a theatre has reason to dread the wounded vanity of actors and authors.

La Cibot, however, struck up an acquaintance with the portress, and traversed all distances in a brief space. There is a sort of freemasonry among the porter tribe, and, indeed,

among the members of every profession; for each calling has its shibboleth, as well as its insulting epithet and the mark with which it brands its followers.

"Ah! madame, you are the portress here," began La Cibot. "I myself am a portress, in a small way, in a house in the Rue de Normandie. M. Pons, your conductor, lodges with us. Oh, how glad I should be to have your place, and see the actors and dancers and authors go past. It is the marshal's bâton in our profession, as the old actor said."

"And how is M. Pons going on, good man?" inquired the portress.

"He is not going on at all; he has not left his bed these two months. He will only leave the house feet foremost, that is certain."

"He will be missed."

"Yes. I have come with a message to the manager from him. Just try to get me a word with him, dear."

"A lady from M. Pons to see you, sir!" After this fashion did the youth attached to the service of the manager's office announce Mme. Cibot, whom the portress below had particularly recommended to his care.

Gaudissart had just come in for a rehearsal. Chance so ordered it that no one wished to speak with him; actors and authors were alike late. Delighted to have news of his conductor, he made a Napoleonic gesture, and La Cibot was admitted.

The sometime commercial traveller, now the head of a popular theatre, regarded his sleeping partners in the light of a legitimate wife; they were not informed of all his doings. The flourishing state of his finances had reacted upon his person. Grown big and stout and high-colored with good cheer and prosperity, Gaudissart made no disguise of his transformation into a Mondor.

"We are turning into a city-father," he once said, trying to be the first to laugh.

"You are only in the Turcaret stage yet, though," repeated Bixiou, who often replaced Gaudissart in the com-

pany of the leading lady of the ballet, the celebrated Héloïse Brisetout.

The former Illustrious Gaudissart, in fact, was exploiting the theatre simply and solely for his own particular benefit, and with brutal disregard of other interests. He first insinuated himself as collaborator in various ballets, plays, and vaudevilles; then he waited till the author wanted money and bought up the other half of the copyright. These after-pieces and vaudevilles, always added to successful plays, brought him in a daily harvest of gold coins. He trafficked by proxy in tickets, allotting a certain number to himself, as the manager's share, till he took in this way a tithe of the receipts. And Gaudissart had other methods of making money besides these official contributions. He sold boxes, he took presents from indifferent actresses burning to go upon the stage to fill small speaking parts, or simply to appear as queens, or pages, and the like: he swelled his nominal third share of the profits to such purpose that the sleeping partners scarcely received one-tenth instead of the remaining two-thirds of the net receipts. Even so, however, the tenth paid them a dividend of fifteen per cent on their capital. On the strength of that fifteen per cent Gaudissart talked of his intelligence, honesty, and zeal, and the good fortune of his partners. When Count Popinot, showing an interest in the concern, asked Matifat, or General Gouraud (Matifat's son-in-law), or Crevel, whether they were satisfied with Gaudissart, Gouraud, now a peer of France, answered, "They say he robs us; but he is such a clever, good-natured fellow that we are quite satisfied."

"This is like La Fontaine's fable," smiled the ex-cabinet minister.

Gaudissart found investments for his capital in other ventures. He thought well of Schwab, Brunner, and the Graffs; that firm was promoting railways, he became a shareholder in the lines. His shrewdness was carefully hidden beneath the frank carelessness of a man of pleasure; he seemed to be interested in nothing but amusements and dress, yet he

thought everything over, and his wide experience of business gained as a commercial traveller stood him in good stead.

A self-made man, he did not take himself seriously. He gave suppers and banquets to celebrities in rooms sumptuously furnished by the house decorator. Showy by nature, with a taste for doing things handsomely, he affected an easy-going air, and seemed so much the less formidable because he had kept the slang of "the road" (to use his own expression), with a few green-room phrases superadded. Now, artists in the theatrical profession are wont to express themselves with some vigor; Gaudissart borrowed sufficient racy green-room talk to blend with his commercial traveller's lively jocularities, and passed for a wit. He was thinking at that moment of selling his license and "going into another line," as he said. He thought of being chairman of a railway company, of becoming a responsible person and an administrator, and finally of marrying Mlle. Minard, daughter of the richest mayor in Paris. He might hope to get into the Chamber through "his line," and, with Popinot's influence, to take office under the Government.

"Whom have I the honor of addressing?" inquired Gaudissart, looking magisterially at La Cibot.

"I am M. Pons's confidential servant, sir."

"Well, and how is the dear fellow?"

"Ill, sir—very ill."

"The devil he is! I am sorry to hear it—I must come and see him; he is such a man as you don't often find."

"Ah, yes! sir, he is a cherub, he is. I have always wondered how he came to be in a theatre."

"Why, madame, the theatre is a house of correction for morals," said Gaudissart. "Poor Pons!—Upon my word, one ought to cultivate the species to keep up the stock. 'Tis a pattern man, and has talent too. When will he be able to take his orchestra again, do you think? A theatre, unfortunately, is like a stage coach: empty or full, it starts at the same time. Here, at six o'clock every evening, up goes the

curtain; and if we are never so sorry for ourselves, it won't make good music. Let us see now—how is he?"

La Cibot pulled out her pocket-handkerchief and held it to her eyes.

"It is a terrible thing to say, my dear sir," said she; "but I am afraid we shall lose him, though we are as careful of him as of the apple of our eye. And, at the same time, I came to say that you must not count on M. Schmucke, worthy man, for he is going to sit up with him at night. One cannot help doing as if there was hope still left, and trying one's best to snatch the dear, good soul from death. But the doctor has given him up—"

"What is the matter with him?"

"He is dying of grief, jaundice, and liver complaint, with a lot of family affairs to complicate matters."

"And a doctor as well," said Gaudissart. "He ought to have had Lebrun, our doctor; it would have cost him nothing."

"M. Pons's doctor is a Providence on earth. But what can a doctor do, no matter how clever he is, with such complications!"

"I wanted the good pair of nutcrackers badly for the accompaniment of my new fairy piece."

"Is it anything that I can do for them?" asked La Cibot, and her expression would have done credit to a Jocrisse.

Gaudissart burst out laughing.

"I am their housekeeper, sir, and do many things my gentlemen—" She did not finish her speech, for in the middle of Gaudissart's roar of laughter a woman's voice exclaimed, "If you are laughing, old man, one may come in," and the leading lady of the ballet rushed into the room and flung herself upon the only sofa. The new-comer was Héloïse Brisetout, with a splendid *algérienne*, as such scarfs used to be called, about her shoulders.

"Who is amusing you? Is it this lady? What post does she want?" asked this nymph, giving the manager such a

glance as artist gives artist, a glance that would make a subject for a picture.

Héloïse, a young woman of exceedingly literary tastes, was on intimate terms with great and famous artists in Bohemia. Elegant, accomplished, and graceful, she was more intelligent than dancers usually are. As she put her question, she sniffed at a scent-bottle full of some aromatic perfume.

"One fine woman is as good as another, madame; and if I don't sniff the pestilence out of a scent-bottle, nor daub brick-dust on my cheeks—"

"That would be a sinful waste, child, when Nature put it on for you to begin with," said Héloïse, with a side glance at her manager.

"I am an honest woman—"

"So much the worse for you. It is not every one by a long chalk that can find some one to keep them, and kept I am, and in slap-up style, madame."

"So much the worse! What do you mean? Oh, you may toss your head and go about in scarfs, you will never have as many declarations as *I* have had, missus. You will never match the Belle Ecaillère of the Cadran bleu."

Héloïse Brisetout rose at once to her feet, stood at attention, and made a military salute, like a soldier who meets his general.

"What?" asked Gaudissart, "are you really La Belle Ecaillère of whom my father used to talk?"

"In that case the cachucha and the polka were after your time; and madame has passed her fiftieth year," remarked Héloïse, and striking an attitude, she declaimed, "'Cinna, let us be friends.'"

"Come, Héloïse, the lady is not up to this; let her alone."

"Madame is perhaps the New Héloïse," suggested La Cibot, with sly innocence.

"Not bad, old lady!" cried Gaudissart.

"It is a venerable joke," said the dancer, "a grizzled pun; find us another, old lady—or take a cigarette."

"I beg your pardon, madame, I feel too unhappy to answer you; my two gentlemen are very ill; and to buy nourishment for them and to spare them trouble, I have pawned everything down to my husband's clothes that I pledged this morning. Here is the ticket!"

"Oh! here, the affair is becoming tragic," cried the fair Héloïse. "What is it all about?"

"Madame drops down upon us like—"

"Like a dancer," said Héloïse; "let me prompt you—missus!"

"Come, I am busy," said Gaudissart. "The joke has gone far enough. Héloïse, this is M. Pons's confidential servant; she has come to tell me that I must not count upon him; our poor conductor is not expected to live. I don't know what to do."

"Oh! poor man; why, he must have a benefit."

"It would ruin him," said Gaudissart. "He might find next day that he owed five hundred francs to charitable institutions, and they refuse to admit that there are any sufferers in Paris except their own. No; look here, my good woman, since you are going in for the Montyon prize—"

He broke off, rang the bell, and the youth before mentioned suddenly appeared.

"Tell the cashier to send me up a thousand-franc note.—Sit down, madame."

"Ah! poor woman, look, she is crying!" exclaimed Héloïse. "How stupid! There, there, mother, we will go to see him; don't cry.—I say, now," she continued, taking the manager into a corner, "you want to make me take the leading part in the ballet in 'Ariane,' you Turk. You are going to be married, and you know how I can make you miserable—"

"Héloïse, my heart is copper-bottomed like a man-of-war."

"I shall bring your children on the scene! I will borrow some somewhere."

"I have owned up about the attachment."

"Do be nice, and give Pons's post to Garangeot; he has talent, poor fellow, and he has not a penny; and I promise peace."

"But wait till Pons is dead, in case the good man may come back again."

"Oh, as to that, no, sir," said La Cibot. "He began to wander in his mind last night, and now he is delirious. It will soon be over, unfortunately."

"At any rate, take Garangeot as a stop-gap!" pleaded Héloïse. "He has the whole press on his side—"

Just at that moment the cashier came in with a note for a thousand francs in his hand.

"Give it to madame here," said Gaudissart. "Good-day, my good woman; take good care of the dear man, and tell him that I am coming to see him to-morrow, or some time—as soon as I can, in short."

"A drowning man," said Héloïse.

"Ah, sir, hearts like yours are only found in a theatre. May God bless you!"

"To what account shall I post this item?" asked the cashier.

"I will countersign the order. Post it to the bonus account."

Before La Cibot went out, she made Mlle. Brisetout a fine courtesy, and heard Gaudissart remark to his mistress:

"Can Garangeot do the dance-music for the 'Mohicans' in twelve days? If he helps me out of my predicament, he shall have Pons's place."

La Cibot had cut off the incomes of the two friends, she had left them without means of subsistence if Pons should chance to recover, and was better rewarded for all this mischief than for any good that she had done. In a few days' time her treacherous trick would bring about the desired result—Elie Magus would have his coveted pictures. But if this first spoliation was to be effected, La Cibot must throw dust in Fraisiér's eyes, and lull the suspicions of that

terrible fellow-conspirator of her own seeking; and Elie Magus and Rémonencq must be bound over to secrecy.

As for Rémonencq, he had gradually come to feel such a passion as uneducated people can conceive when they come to Paris from the depths of the country, bringing with them all the fixed ideas bred of the solitary country life; all the ignorance of a primitive nature, all the brute appetites that become so many fixed ideas. Mme. Cibot's masculine beauty, her vivacity, her market-woman's wit, had all been remarked by the marine store-dealer. He thought at first of taking La Cibot from her husband, bigamy among the lower classes in Paris being much more common than is generally supposed; but greed was like a slip-knot drawn more and more tightly about his heart, till reason at length was stifled. When Rémonencq computed that the commission paid by himself and Elie Magus amounted to about forty thousand francs, he determined to have La Cibot for his legitimate spouse, and his thoughts turned from a misdemeanor to a crime. A romantic purely speculative dream, persistently followed through a tobacco-smoker's long musings as he lounged in the doorway, had brought him to the point of wishing that the little tailor were dead. At a stroke he beheld his capital trebled; and then he thought of La Cibot. What a good saleswoman she would be! What a handsome figure she would make in a magnificent shop on the Boulevards! The twofold covetousness turned Rémonencq's head. In fancy he took a shop that he knew of on the Boulevard de la Madeleine, he stocked it with Pons's treasures, and then—after dreaming his dream in sheets of gold, after seeing millions in the blue spiral wreaths that rose from his pipe, he awoke to find himself face to face with the little tailor. Cibot was sweeping the yard, the doorstep, and the pavement just as his neighbor was taking down the shutters and displaying his wares; for since Pons fell ill, La Cibot's work had fallen to her husband.

The Auvergnat began to look upon the little, swarthy,

stunted, copper-colored tailor as the one obstacle in his way, and pondered how to be rid of him. Meanwhile, this growing passion made La Cibot very proud, for she had reached an age when a woman begins to understand that she may grow old.

So, early one morning, she meditatively watched Rémonencq as he arranged his odds and ends for sale. She wondered how far his love could go. He came across to her.

"Well," he said, "are things going as you wish?"

"It is you who make me uneasy," said La Cibot. "I shall be talked about; the neighbors will see you making sheep's eyes at me."

She left the doorway and dived into the Auvergnat's back shop.

"What a notion!" said Rémonencq.

"Come here, I have something to say to you," said La Cibot. "M. Pons's heirs are about to make a stir; they are capable of giving us a lot of trouble. God knows what might come of it if they send the lawyers here to poke their noses into the affair like hunting-dogs. I cannot get M. Schmucke to sell a few pictures unless you like me well enough to keep the secret—such a secret!—With your head on the block, you must not say where the pictures come from, nor who it was that sold them. When M. Pons is once dead and buried, you understand, nobody will know how many pictures there ought to be; if there are fifty-three pictures instead of sixty-seven, nobody will be any the wiser. Besides, if M. Pons sold them himself while he was alive, nobody can find fault."

"No," agreed Rémonencq, "it is all one to me, but M. Elie Magus will want receipts in due form."

"And you shall have your receipt too, bless your life! Do you suppose that *I* should write them?—No, M. Schmucke will do that. But tell your Jew that he must keep the secret as closely as you do," she continued.

"We will be as mute as fishes. That is our business. I

myself can read, but I cannot write, and that is why I want a capable wife that has had education like you. I have thought of nothing but earning my bread all my days, and now I wish I had some little Rémonencqs. Do leave that Cibot of yours."

"Why, here comes your Jew," said the portress; "we can arrange the whole business."

Elie Magus came every third day very early in the morning to know when he could buy his pictures. "Well, my dear lady," said he, "how are we getting on?"

"Has nobody been to speak to you about M. Pons and his gimcracks?" asked La Cibot.

"I received a letter from a lawyer," said Elie Magus, "a rascal that seems to me to be trying to make work for himself; I don't like people of that sort, so I took no notice of his letter. Three days afterward he came to see me, and left his card. I told my porter that I am never at home when he calls."

"You are a love of a Jew," said La Cibot. Little did she know Elie Magus's prudence. "Well, sonnies, in a few days' time I will bring M. Schmucke to the point of selling you seven or eight pictures, ten at most. But on two conditions.—Absolute secrecy in the first place. M. Schmucke will send for you, sir, is not that so? And M. Rémonencq suggested that you might be a purchaser, eh?—And, come what may, I will not meddle in it for nothing. You are giving forty-six thousand francs for four pictures, are you not?"

"So be it," groaned the Jew.

"Very good. This is the second condition. You will give me *forty-three* thousand francs, and pay three thousand only to M. Schmucke; Rémonencq will buy four for two thousand francs, and hand over the surplus to me.—But, at the same time, you see, my dear M. Magus, I am going to help you and Rémonencq to a splendid bit of business—on condition that the profits are shared among the three of us. I will introduce you to that lawyer, as he, no doubt, will come here. You shall make a valuation of M. Pons's

things at the prices which you can give for them, so that M. Fraasier may know how much the property is worth. But—not until after our sale, you understand!”

“I understand,” said the Jew, “but it takes time to look at the things and value them.”

“You shall have half a day. But, there, that is my affair. Talk it over between yourselves, my boys, and for that matter the business will be settled by the day after to-morrow. I will go round to speak to this Fraasier; for Dr. Poulain tells him everything that goes on in the house, and it is a great bother to keep that scarecrow quiet.”

La Cibot met Fraasier half-way between the Rue de la Perle and the Rue de Normandie; so impatient was he to know the “elements of the case” (to use his own expression) that he was coming to see her.

“I say! I was going to you,” said she.

Fraasier grumbled because Elie Magus had refused to see him. But La Cibot extinguished the spark of distrust that gleamed in the lawyer’s eyes by informing him that Elie Magus had returned from a journey, and that she would arrange for an interview in Pons’s rooms and for the valuation of the property; for the day after to-morrow at latest.

“Deal frankly with me,” returned Fraasier. “It is more than probable that I shall act for M. Pons’s next-of-kin. In that case, I shall be even better able to serve you.”

The words were spoken so dryly that La Cibot quaked. This starving limb of the law was sure to manœuvre on his side as she herself was doing. She resolved forthwith to hurry on the sale of the pictures.

La Cibot was right. The doctor and lawyer had clubbed together to buy a new suit of clothes in which Fraasier could decently present himself before Mme. la Présidente Camusot de Marville. Indeed, if the clothes had been ready, the interview would have taken place sooner, for the fate of the couple hung upon its issues. Fraasier left Mme. Cibot, and went to try on his new clothes. He found them waiting for him, went home, adjusted his new wig, and toward ten o’clock

that morning set out in a carriage from a livery stable for the Rue de Hanovre, hoping for an audience. In his white tie, yellow gloves, and new wig, redolent of eau de Portugal, he looked something like a poisonous essence kept in a cut-glass bottle, seeming but the more deadly because everything about it is daintily neat, from the stopper covered with white kid to the label and the thread. His peremptory manner, the eruption on his blotched countenance, the green eyes, and a malignant something about him—all these things struck the beholder with the same sense of surprise as storm-clouds in a blue sky. If in his private office, as he showed himself to La Cibot, he was the common knife that a murderer catches up for his crime—now, at the Présidente's door, he was the daintily-wrought dagger which a woman sets among the ornaments on her what-not.

A great change had taken place in the Rue de Hanovre. The Count and Countess Popinot and the young people would not allow the President and his wife to leave the house that they had settled upon their daughter to pay rent elsewhere. M. and Mme. la Présidente, therefore, were installed on the second floor, now left at liberty, for the elderly lady had made up her mind to end her days in the country.

Mme. Camusot took Madeleine Vivet, with her cook and her manservant, to the second floor, and would have been as much pinched for money as in the early days, if the house had not been rent free, and the President's salary increased to ten thousand francs. This *aurea mediocritas* was but little satisfactory to Mme. de Marville. Even now she wished for means more in accordance with her ambitions; for when she handed over their fortune to their daughter, she spoiled her husband's prospects. Now Amélie had set her heart upon seeing her husband in the Chamber of Deputies; she was not one of those women who find it easy to give up their way; and she by no means despaired of returning her husband for the arrondissement in which Marville is situated. So for the past two months she had teased her father-in-law, M. le Baron Camusot (for the new peer of France had been advanced to

that rank), and done her utmost to extort an advance of a hundred thousand francs of the inheritance which one day would be theirs. She wanted, she said, to buy a small estate worth about two thousand francs per annum set like a wedge within the Marville lands. There she and her husband would be near their children and in their own house, while the addition would round out the Marville property. With that the Présidente laid stress upon the recent sacrifices which she and her husband had been compelled to make in order to marry Cécile to Viscount Popinot, and asked the old man how he could bar his eldest son's way to the highest honors of the magistracy, when such honors were only to be had by those who made themselves a strong position in parliament. Her husband would know how to take up such a position, he would make himself feared by those in office, and so on and so on. "They do nothing for you unless you tighten a halter round their necks to loosen their tongues," said she. "They are ungrateful. What do they not owe to Camusot! Camusot brought the House of Orleans to the throne by enforcing the ordinances of July."

M. Camusot senior answered that he had gone out of his depth in railway speculations. He quite admitted that it was necessary to come to the rescue, but put off the day until shares should rise, as they were expected to do.

This half-promise, extracted some few days before Fraasier's visit, had plunged the Présidente into depths of affliction. It was doubtful whether the ex-proprietor of Marville was eligible for re-election without the land qualification.

Fraasier found no difficulty in obtaining speech of Madeleine Vivet; such viper natures own their kinship at once.

"I should like to see Mme. la Présidente for a few moments, mademoiselle," Fraasier said in bland accents; "I have come on a matter of business which touches her fortune; it is a question of a legacy, be sure you mention that. I have not the honor of being known to Mme. la Présidente, so my name is of no consequence. I am not in the habit of leaving my chambers, but I know the respect that is due

to a President's wife, and I took the trouble of coming myself to save all possible delay."

The matter thus broached, when repeated and amplified by the waiting-maid, naturally brought a favorable answer. It was a decisive moment for the double ambition hidden in Fraasier's mind. Bold as a petty provincial attorney, sharp, rough-spoken, and curt as he was, he felt as captains feel before the decisive battle of a campaign. As he went into the little drawing-room where Amélie was waiting for him, he felt a slight perspiration breaking out upon his forehead and down his back. Every sudorific hitherto employed had failed to produce this result upon a skin which horrible diseases had left impervious. "Even if I fail to make my fortune," said he to himself, "I shall recover. Poulain said that if I could only perspire I should recover."

The Présidente came forward in her morning gown.

"Madame—" said Fraasier, stopping short to bow with the humility by which officials recognize the superior rank of the person whom they address.

"Take a seat, monsieur," said the Présidente. She saw at a glance that this was a man of law.

"Mme. la Présidente, if I take the liberty of calling your attention to a matter which concerns M. le Président, it is because I am sure that M. de Marville, occupying, as he does, a high position, would leave matters to take their natural course, and so lose seven or eight hundred thousand francs, a sum which ladies (who, in my opinion, have a far better understanding of private business than the best of magistrates)—a sum which ladies, I repeat, would by no means despise—"

"You spoke of a legacy," interrupted the lady, dazzled by the wealth, and anxious to hide her surprise. Amélie de Marville, like an impatient novel-reader, wanted the end of the story.

"Yes, madame, a legacy that you are like to lose; yes, to lose altogether; but I can, that is, I *could* recover it for you, if—"

"Speak out, monsieur." Mme. de Marville spoke frigidly, scanning Fraasier as she spoke with a sagacious eye.

"Madame, your eminent capacity is known to me; I was once at Mantes. M. Leboëuf, President of the Tribunal, is acquainted with M. de Marville, and can answer inquiries about me—"

The Présidente's shrug was so ruthlessly significant that Fraasier was compelled to make short work of his parenthetical discourse.

"So distinguished a woman will at once understand why I speak of myself in the first place. It is the shortest way to the property."

To this acute observation the lady replied by a gesture. Fraasier took the sign for a permission to continue.

"I was an attorney, madame, at Mantes. My connection was all the fortune that I was likely to have. I took over M. Levroux's practice. You knew him, no doubt?"

The Présidente inclined her head.

"With borrowed capital and some ten thousand francs of my own, I went to Mantes. I had been with Desroches, one of the cleverest attorneys in Paris, I had been his head-clerk for six years. I was so unlucky as to make an enemy of the attorney for the crown at Mantes, Monsieur—"

"Olivier Vinet."

"Son of the Attorney-General, yes, madame. He was paying his court to a little person—"

"Whom?"

"Mme. Vatinelle."

"Oh! Mme. Vatinelle. She was very pretty and very—er—when I was there—"

"She was not unkind to me: *inde iræ*," Fraasier continued. "I was industrious; I wanted to repay my friends and to marry; I wanted work; I went in search of it; and before long I had more on my hands than anybody else. Bah! I had every soul in Mantes against me—attorneys, notaries, and even the bailiffs. They tried to fasten a quarrel on me. In our ruthless profession, as you know, ma-

dame, if you wish to ruin a man, it is soon done. I was concerned for both parties in a case, and they found it out. It was a trifle irregular; but it is sometimes done in Paris, attorneys in certain cases hand the rhubarb and take the senna. They do things differently at Mantes. I had done M. Bouyonnet this little service before; but, egged on by his colleagues and the attorney for the crown, he betrayed me.—I am keeping back nothing, you see.—There was a great hue and cry about it. I was a scoundrel; they made me out blacker than Marat; forced me to sell out; ruined me. And I am in Paris now. I have tried to get together a practice; but my health is so bad that I have only two quiet hours out of the twenty-four.

“At this moment I have but one ambition, and a very small one. Some day,” he continued, “you will be the wife of the Keeper of the Seals, or of the Home Secretary, it may be; but I, poor and sickly as I am, desire nothing but a post in which I can live in peace for the rest of my life, a place without any opening in which to vegetate. I should like to be a justice of the peace in Paris. It would be a mere trifle to you and M. le Président to gain the appointment for me; for the present Keeper of the Seals must be anxious to keep on good terms with you. . . .

“And that is not all, madame,” added Fraasier. Seeing that Mme. de Marville was about to speak, he cut her short with a gesture. “I have a friend, the doctor in attendance on the old man who ought to leave his property to M. le Président. (We are coming to the point, you see.) The doctor’s co-operation is indispensable, and the doctor is precisely in my position: he has abilities, he is unlucky. I learned through him how far your interests were imperilled; for even as I speak, all may be over, and the will disinheriting M. le Président may have been made. This doctor wishes to be head-surgeon of a hospital or of a Government school. He must have a position in Paris equal to mine. . . . Pardon me if I have enlarged on a matter so delicate; but we must have no misunderstandings in this business. The

doctor is, besides, much respected and learned; he saved the life of the Comtesse Popinot's great-uncle, M. Pillerault.

"Now, if you are so good as to promise these two posts—the appointment of justice of the peace and the sinecure for my friend—I will undertake to bring you the property, *almost* intact.—Almost intact, I say, for the co-operation of the legatee and of several other persons is absolutely indispensable, and some obligations will be incurred. You will not redeem your promises until I have fulfilled mine."

The Présidente had folded her arms, and for the last minute or two sat like a person compelled to listen to a sermon. Now she unfolded her arms, and looked at Fraasier as she said, "Monsieur, all that you say concerning your interests has the merit of clearness; but my own interests in the matter are by no means so clear—"

"A word or two will explain everything, madame. M. le Président is M. Pons's first cousin once removed, and his sole heir. M. Pons is very ill; he is about to make his will, if it is not made already, in favor of a German, a friend of his named Schmucke; and he has more than seven hundred thousand francs to leave. I hope to have an accurate valuation made in two or three days—"

"If this is so," said the Présidente, "I made a great mistake in quarrelling with him and throwing the blame—" she thought aloud, amazed by the possibility of such a sum.

"No, madame. If there had been no rupture, he would be as blithe as a lark this moment, and might outlive you and M. le Président and me. . . . The ways of Providence are mysterious, let us not seek to fathom them," he added, to palliate to some extent the hideous idea. "It cannot be helped. We men of business look at the practical aspects of things. Now you see clearly, madame, that M. de Marville in his public position would do nothing, and could do nothing, as things are. He has broken off all relations with his cousin. You see nothing now of Pons; you have forbidden him the house; you had excellent reasons, no doubt,

for doing as you did, but the old man is ill, and he is leaving his property to the only friend left to him. A President of the Court of Appeal in Paris could say nothing under such circumstances if the will was made out in due form. But between ourselves, madame, when one has a right to expect seven or eight hundred thousand francs—or a million, it may be (how should I know?)—it is very unpleasant to have it slip through one's fingers, especially if one happens to be the heir-at-law. . . . But, on the other hand, to prevent this, one is obliged to stoop to dirty work; work so difficult, so ticklish, bringing you cheek by jowl with such low people, servants and subordinates; and into such close contact with them too, that no barrister, no attorney in Paris could take up such a case.

"What you want is a briefless barrister like me," said he, "a man who should have real and solid ability, who has learned to be devoted, and yet, being in a precarious position, is brought temporarily to a level with such people. In my arrondissement I undertake business for small tradespeople and working folk. Yes, madame, you see the straits to which I have been brought by the enmity of an attorney for the crown, now a deputy-public prosecutor in Paris, who could not forgive me my superiority.—I know you, madame, I know that your influence means a solid certainty; and in such a service rendered to you, I saw the end of my troubles and success for my friend Dr. Poulain."

The lady sat pensive during a moment of unspeakable torture for Fraasier. Vinet, an orator of the Centre, attorney-general (*procureur-général*) for the past sixteen years, nominated half-a-score of times for the chancellorship, the father, moreover, of the attorney for the crown at Mantes who had been appointed to a post in Paris within the last year—Vinet was an enemy and a rival for the malignant Président. The haughty attorney-general did not hide his contempt for Président Camusot. This fact Fraasier did not know, and could not know.

"Have you nothing on your conscience but the fact that

you were concerned for both parties?" asked she, looking steadily at Fraisiert.

"Mme. la Présidente can see M. Lebœuf; M. Lebœuf was favorable to me."

"Do you feel sure that M. Lebœuf will give M. de Marville and M. le Comte Popinot a good account of you?"

"I will answer for it, especially now that M. Olivier Vinet has left Mantes; for between ourselves, good M. Lebœuf was afraid of that crabbed little official. If you will permit me, Mme. la Présidente, I will go to Mantes and see M. Lebœuf. No time will be lost, for I cannot be certain of the precise value of the property for two or three days. I do not wish that you should know all the ins and outs of this affair; you ought not to know them, Mme. la Présidente, but is not the reward that I expect for my complete devotion a pledge of my success?"

"Very well. If M. Lebœuf will speak in your favor, and if the property is worth as much as you think (I doubt it myself), you shall have both appointments, *if* you succeed, mind you—"

"I will answer for it, madame. Only, you must be so good as to have your notary and your attorney here when I shall need them; you must give me a power of attorney to act for M. le Président, and tell those gentlemen to follow my instructions, and to do nothing on their own responsibility."

"The responsibility rests with you," the Présidente answered solemnly, "so you ought to have full powers.—But is M. Pons very ill?" she asked, smiling.

"Upon my word, madame, he might pull through, especially with so conscientious a doctor as Poulain in attendance; for this friend of mine, madame, is simply an unconscious spy directed by me in your interests. Left to himself, he would save the old man's life; but there is some one else by the sick-bed, a portress, who would push him into his grave for thirty thousand francs. Not that she would kill him outright; she will not give him arsenic, she is not so merciful; she will do worse, she will kill him by

inches, she will worry him to death day by day. If the poor old man were kept quiet and left in peace; if he were taken into the country and cared for and made much of by friends, he would get well again; but he is harassed by a sort of Mme. Evrard. When the woman was young she was one of thirty Belles Ecaillères, famous in Paris; she is a rough, greedy, gossiping woman; she torments him to make a will and to leave her something handsome, and the end of it will be induration of the liver; calculi are possibly forming at this moment, and he has not strength to bear an operation. The doctor, noble soul, is in a horrible predicament. He really ought to send the woman away—”

“Why, then, this vixen is a monster!” cried the lady in thin flutelike tones.

Fraisier smiled inwardly at the likeness between himself and the terrible Présidente; he knew all about those suave modulations of a naturally sharp voice. He thought of another president, the hero of an anecdote related by Louis XI., stamped by that monarch’s final phrase. Blessed with a wife after the pattern of Socrates’ spouse, and ungifted with the sage’s philosophy, he mingled salt with the corn in the mangers and forbade the grooms to give water to the horses. As his wife rode out along the Seine toward their country-house, the animals bolted into the river with the lady, and the magistrate returned thanks to Providence for ridding him of his wife “in so natural a manner.” At this present moment Mme. de Marville thanked Heaven for placing at Pons’s bedside a woman so likely to get him “decently” out of the way.

Aloud she said, “I would not take a million at the price of a single scruple.—Your friend ought to speak to M. Pons and have the woman sent away.”

“In the first place, madame, Messrs. Schmucke and Pons think the woman an angel; they would send my friend away. And secondly, the doctor lies under an obligation to this horrid oyster-woman; she called him in to attend M. Pillerault. When he tells her to be as gentle as possible with

the patient, he simply shows the creature how to make matters worse."

"What does your friend think of *my* cousin's condition?"

This man's clear, business-like way of putting the facts of the case frightened Mme. de Marville; she felt that his keen gaze read the thoughts of a heart as greedy as La Cibot's own.

"In six weeks the property will change hands."

The Présidente dropped her eyes.

"Poor man!" she sighed, vainly striving after a dolorous expression.

"Have you any message, madame, for M. Leboeuf? I am taking the train to Mantes."

"Yes. Wait a moment, and I will write to ask him to dine with us to-morrow. I want to see him, so that we may act in concert to repair the injustice to which you have fallen a victim."

The Présidente left the room. Fraisier saw himself a justice of the peace. He felt transformed at the thought; he grew stouter; his lungs were filled with the breath of success, the breeze of prosperity. He dipped into the mysterious reservoirs of volition for fresh and strong doses of the divine essence. To reach success, he felt, as Rémonencq had felt, that he was ready for anything, for crime itself, provided that no proofs of it remained. He had faced the Présidente boldly; he had transmuted conjecture into reality; he had made assertions right and left, all to the end that she might authorize him to protect her interests and win her influence. As he stood there, he represented the infinite misery of two lives, and the no less boundless desires of two men. He spurned the squalid horrors of the Rue de la Perle. He saw the glitter of a thousand crowns in fees from La Cibot, and five thousand francs from the Présidente. This meant an abode such as befitted his future prospects. Finally, he was repaying Dr. Poulain.

There are hard, ill-natured beings, goaded by distress or disease into active malignity, that yet entertain diametrically

opposed sentiments with a like degree of vehemence. If Richelieu was a good hater, he was no less a good friend. Fraasier, in his gratitude, would have let himself be cut in two for Poulain.

So absorbed was he in these visions of a comfortable and prosperous life, that he did not see the Présidente come in with the letter in her hand, and she, looking at him, thought him less ugly now than at first. He was about to be useful to her, and as soon as a tool belongs to us we look upon it with other eyes.

"M. Fraasier," said she, "you have convinced me of your intelligence, and I think that you can speak frankly."

Fraasier replied by an eloquent gesture.

"Very well," continued the lady, "I must ask you to give a candid reply to this question: Are we, either of us, M. de Marville or I, likely to be compromised, directly or indirectly, by your action in this matter?"

"I would not have come to you, madame, if I thought that some day I should have to reproach myself for bringing so much as a splash of mud upon you, for in your position a speck the size of a pin's head is seen by all the world. You forget, madame, that I must satisfy you if I am to be a justice of the peace in Paris. I received one lesson at the outset of my life; it was so sharp that I do not care to lay myself open to a second thrashing. To sum it up in a last word, madame, I will not take a step in which you are directly involved without previously consulting you—"

"Very good. Here is the letter. And now I shall expect to be informed of the exact value of the estate."

"There is the whole matter," said Fraasier shrewdly, making his bow to the Présidente with as much graciousness as his countenance could exhibit.

"What a providence!" thought Mme. Camusot de Marville. "So I am to be rich! Camusot will be sure of his election if we let loose this Fraasier upon the Bolbec constituency. What a tool!"

"What a providence!" Fraasier said to himself as he

descended the staircase; "and what a sharp woman Mme. Camusot is! I should want a woman in these circumstances. Now to work!"

And he departed for Mantes to gain the good graces of a man he scarcely knew; but he counted upon Mme. Vatinelle, to whom, unfortunately, he owed all his troubles—and some troubles are of a kind that resemble a protested bill while the defaulter is yet solvent, in that they bear interest.

Three days afterward, while Schmucke slept (for in accordance with the compact he now sat up at night with the patient), La Cibot had a "tiff," as she was pleased to call it, with Pons. It will not be out of place to call attention to one particularly distressing symptom of liver complaint. The sufferer is always more or less inclined to impatience and fits of anger; an outburst of this kind seems to give relief at the time, much as a patient while the fever fit is upon him feels that he has boundless strength; but collapse sets in so soon as the excitement passes off, and the full extent of mischief sustained by the system is discernible. This is especially the case when the disease has been induced by some great shock; and the prostration is so much the more dangerous because the patient is kept upon a restricted diet. It is a kind of fever affecting neither the blood nor the brain, but the humoristic mechanism, fretting the whole system, producing melancholy, in which the patient hates himself; in such a crisis anything may cause dangerous irritation.

In spite of all that the doctor could say, La Cibot had no belief in this wear and tear of the nervous system by the humoristic. She was a woman of the people, without experience or education; Dr. Poulain's explanations for her were simply "doctors' notions." Like most of her class, she thought that sick people must be fed, and nothing short of Dr. Poulain's direct order prevented her from administering ham, a nice omelet, or vanilla chocolate upon the sly.

"Give M. Pons one single mouthful of any solid food whatsoever, and you will kill him as surely as if you put a bullet through him," he said.

The infatuation of the working classes on this point is very strong. The reason of their reluctance to enter a hospital is the idea that they will be starved there. The mortality caused by the food smuggled in by the wives of patients on visiting-days was at one time so great that the doctors were obliged to institute a very strict search for contraband provisions.

If La Cibot was to realize her profits at once, a momentary quarrel must be worked up in some way. She began by telling Pons about her visit to the theatre, not omitting her passage of arms with Mlle. Héloïse the dancer.

"But why did you go?" the invalid asked for the third time. La Cibot once launched on a stream of words, he was powerless to stop her.

"So, then, when I had given her a piece of my mind, Mademoiselle Héloïse saw who I was and knuckled under, and we were the best of friends.—And now do you ask me why I went?" she added, repeating Pons's question.

There are certain babblers, babblers of genius are they, who sweep up interruptions, objections, and observations in this way as they go along, by way of provision to swell the matter of their conversation, as if that source were ever in any danger of running dry.

"Why I went?" repeated she. "I went to get your M. Gaudissart out of a fix. He wants some music for a ballet, and you are hardly fit to scribble on sheets of paper and do your work, dearie.—So I understood, things being so, that a M. Garangeot was to be asked to set the 'Mohicans' to music—"

"Garangeot!" roared Pons in fury. "*Garangeot!* a man with no talent; I would not have him for first violin! He is very clever, he is very good at musical criticism, but as to composing—I doubt it! And what the devil put the notion of going to the theatre into your head?"

"How confoundedly contrary the man is! Look here, dearie, we mustn't boil over like milk on the fire! How are you to write music in the state that you are in? Why,

you can't have looked at yourself in the glass! Will you have the glass and see? You are nothing but skin and bone—you are as weak as a sparrow, and do you think that you are fit to make your notes? why, you would not so much as make out mine. . . . And that reminds me that I ought to go up to the third-floor lodger's that owes us seventeen francs; it is worth going to fetch is seventeen francs, for when the chemist has been paid we shall not have twenty left.—So I had to tell M. Gaudissart (I like that name), a good sort he seems to be—a regular Roger Bontemps that would just suit me.—*He* will never have liver complaint!—Well, so I had to tell him how you were.—Lord! you are not well, and he has put some one else in your place for a bit—”

“Some one else in my place!” cried Pons in a terrible voice, as he sat upright in bed. Sick people, generally speaking, and those more particularly who lie within the sweep of the scythe of Death, cling to their places with the same passionate energy that the beginner displays to gain a start in life. To hear that some one had taken his place was like a foretaste of death to the dying man.

“Why, the doctor told me that I was going on as well as possible,” continued he; “he said that I should soon be about again as usual. You have killed me, ruined me, murdered me!”

“Tut, tut, tut!” cried La Cibot, “there you go! I am killing you, am I? Mercy on us! these are the pretty things that you are always telling M. Schmucke when my back is turned. I hear all that you say, that I do! You are a monster of ingratitude.”

“But you do not know that if I am only away for another fortnight, they will tell me that I have had my day, that I am old-fashioned, out of date, Empire, rococo, when I go back. Garangeot will have made friends all over the theatre, high and low. He will lower the pitch to suit some actress that cannot sing, he will lick M. Gaudissart's boots!” cried the sick man, who clung to life. “He has friends that will

praise him in all the newspapers; and when things are like that in such a shop, Mme. Cibot, they can find holes in anybody's coat. . . . What fiend drove you to do it?"

"Why! plague take it, M. Schmucke talked it over with me for a week. What would you have? You see nothing but yourself! You are so selfish that other people may die if you can only get better.—Why, poor M. Schmucke has been tired out this month past! he is tied by the leg, he can go nowhere, he cannot give lessons nor take his place at the theatre. Do you really see nothing? He sits up with you at night, and I take the nursing in the day. If I were to sit up at night with you, as I tried to do at first when I thought you were so poor, I should have to sleep all day. And who would see to the house and look out for squalls! Illness is illness, it cannot be helped, and here are you—"

"This was not Schmucke's idea, it is quite impossible—"

"That means that it was *I* who took it into my head to do it, does it? Do you think that we are made of iron? Why, if M. Schmucke had given seven or eight lessons every day and conducted the orchestra every evening at the theatre from six o'clock till half-past eleven at night, he would have died in ten days' time. Poor man, he would give his life for you, and do you want to be the death of him? By the authors of my days, I have never seen a sick man to match you! Where are your senses? have you put them in pawn? We are all slaving our lives out for you; we do all for the best, and you are not satisfied! Do you want to drive us raging mad? I myself, to begin with, am tired out as it is—"

La Cibot rattled on at her ease; Pons was too angry to say a word. He writhed on his bed, painfully uttering inarticulate sounds; the blow was killing him. And at this point, as usual, the scolding turned suddenly to tenderness. The nurse dashed at her patient, grasped him by the head, made him lie down by main force, and dragged the blankets over him.

"How any one can get into such a state!" exclaimed she.

"After all, it is your illness, dearie. That is what good M. Poulain says. See now, keep quiet and be good, my dear little sonny. Everybody that comes near you worships you, and the doctor himself comes to see you twice a day. What would he say if he found you in such a way? You put me out of all patience; you ought not to behave like this. If you have Ma'am Cibot to nurse you, you should treat her better. You shout and you talk!—you ought not to do it, you know that. Talking irritates you. And why do you fly into a passion? The wrong is all on your side; you are always bothering me. Look here, let us have it out! If M. Schmucke and I, who love you like our life, thought that we were doing right—well, my cherub, it was right, you may be sure."

"Schmucke never could have told you to go to the theatre without speaking to me about it—"

"And must I wake him, poor dear, when he is sleeping like one of the blessed, and call him in as witness?"

"No, no!" cried Pons. "If my kind and loving Schmucke made the resolution, perhaps I am worse than I thought." His eyes wandered round the room, dwelling on the beautiful things in it with a melancholy look painful to see.

"So I must say good-by to my dear pictures, to all the things that have come to be like so many friends to me . . . and to my divine friend Schmucke? . . . Oh! can it be true?"

La Cibot, acting her heartless comedy, held her handkerchief to her eyes; and at that mute response the sufferer fell to dark musings—so sorely stricken was he by the double stab dealt to health and his interests by the loss of his post and the near prospect of death, that he had no strength left for anger. He lay, ghastly and wan, like a consumptive patient after a wrestling bout with the Destroyer.

"In M. Schmucke's interests, you see, you would do well to send for M. Trognon; he is the notary of the quarter and a very good man," said La Cibot, seeing that her victim was completely exhausted.

"You are always talking about this Trognon—"

"Oh! he or another, it is all one to me, for anything you will leave me."

She tossed her head to signify that she despised riches. There was silence in the room.

A moment later Schmucke came in. He had slept for six hours, hunger awakened him, and now he stood at Pons's bedside watching his friend without saying a word, for Mme. Cibot had laid a finger on her lips.

"Hush!" she whispered. Then she rose and went up to add under her breath, "He is going off to sleep at last, thank Heaven! He is as cross as a red donkey!—What can you expect, he is struggling with his illness—"

"No, on the contrary, I am very patient," said the victim in a weary voice that told of a dreadful exhaustion; "but, oh! Schmucke, my dear friend, she has been to the theatre to turn me out of my place."

There was a pause. Pons was too weak to say more. La Cibot took the opportunity and tapped her head significantly. "Do not contradict him," she said to Schmucke; "it would kill him."

Pons gazed into Schmucke's honest face. "And she says that you sent her—" he continued.

"Yes," Schmucke affirmed heroically. "It had to be. Hush!—let us save your life. It is absurd to work and train your strength if you have a treasure. Get better; we will sell some *préc-à-préc* and end our days quietly in a corner somewhere, mit kind Montame Zipod."

"She has perverted you," moaned Pons.

Mme. Cibot had taken up her station behind the bed to make signals unobserved. Pons thought that she had left the room. "She is murdering me," he added.

"What is that? I am murdering you, am I?" cried La Cibot, suddenly appearing, hand on hips and eyes aflame. "I am as faithful as a dog, and this is all I get! God Almighty!—"

She burst into tears and dropped down into the great

chair, a tragical movement which wrought a most disastrous revulsion in Pons.

"Very good," she said, rising to her feet. The woman's malignant eyes looked poison and bullets at the two friends. "Very good. Nothing that I can do is right here, and I am tired of slaving my life out. You shall take a nurse."

Pons and Schmucke exchanged glances in dismay.

"Oh! you may look at each other like actors. I mean it. I shall ask Dr. Poulain to find a nurse for you. And now we will settle accounts. You shall pay me back the money that I have spent on you, and that I would never have asked you for, I that have gone to M. Pillerault to borrow another five hundred francs of him—"

"It ees his illness!" cried Schmucke—he sprang to Mme. Cibot and put an arm round her waist—"half batience."

"As for you, you are an angel, I could kiss the ground you tread upon," said she. "But M. Pons never liked me, he always hated me. Besides, he thinks perhaps that I want to be mentioned in his will—"

"Hush! you vill kill him!" cried Schmucke.

"Good-by, sir," said La Cibot, with a withering look at Pons. "You may keep well for all the harm I wish you. When you can speak to me pleasantly, when you can believe that what I do is done for the best, I will come back again. Till then I shall stay in my own room. You were like my own child to me; did anybody ever see a child revolt against its mother? . . . No, no, M. Schmucke, I do not want to hear more. I will bring you *your* dinner and wait upon *you*, but you must take a nurse. Ask M. Poulain about it."

And out she went, slamming the door after her so violently that the precious, fragile objects in the room trembled. To Pons in his torture, the rattle of china was like the final blow dealt by the executioner to a victim broken on the wheel.

An hour later La Cibot called to Schmucke through the door, telling him that his dinner was waiting for him in

the dining-room. She would not cross the threshold. Poor Schmucke went out to her with a haggard, tear-stained face.

"Mein boor Bons is vandering," said he; "he says dat you are ein pad voman. It ees his illness," he added hastily, to soften La Cibot and excuse his friend.

"Oh, I have had enough of his illness! Look here, he is neither father, nor husband, nor brother, nor child of mine. He has taken a dislike to me; well and good, that is enough! As for you, you see, I would follow *you* to the end of the world; but when a woman gives her life, her heart, and all her savings, and neglects her husband (for here has Cibot fallen ill), and then hears that she is a bad woman—it is coming it rather too strong, it is."

"Too sthrong?"

"Too strong, yes. Never mind idle words. Let us come to the facts. As to that, you owe me for three months at a hundred and ninety francs—that is five hundred and seventy francs; then there is the rent that I have paid twice (here are the receipts), six hundred more, including rates and the sou in the franc for the porter—something under twelve hundred francs altogether, and with the two thousand francs besides—without interest, mind you—the total amounts to three thousand one hundred and ninety-two francs. And remember that you will want at least two thousand francs before long for the doctor, and the nurse, and the medicine, and the nurse's board. That was why I borrowed a thousand francs of M. Pillerault," and with that she held up Gaudisart's banknote.

It may readily be conceived that Schmucke listened to this reckoning with amazement, for he knew about as much of business as a cat knows of music.

"Montame Zipod," he expostulated, "Bons haf lost his head. Bardon him, und nurse him as pefore, und pe our profidence; I peg it of you on mine knees," and he knelt before La Cibot and kissed the tormentor's hands.

La Cibot raised Schmucke and kissed him on the forehead.

"Listen, my lamb," said she, "here is Cibot ill in bed; I have just sent for Dr. Poulain. So I ought to set my affairs in order. And what is more, Cibot saw me crying, and flew into such a passion that he will not have me set foot in here again. It is *he* who wants the money; it is his, you see. We women can do nothing when it comes to that. But if you let him have his money back again—the three thousand two hundred francs—he will be quiet perhaps. Poor man, it is his all, earned by the sweat of his brow, the savings of twenty-six years of life together. He must have his money to-morrow; there is no getting round him.—You do not know Cibot; when he is angry he would kill a man. Well, I might perhaps get leave of him to look after you both as before. Be easy. I will just let him say anything that comes into his head. I will bear it all for love of you, an angel as you are."

"No, I am ein boor man, dot lof his friend and would gif his life to save him—"

"But the money?" broke in La Cibot. "My good M. Schmucke, let us suppose that you pay me nothing; you will want three thousand francs, and where are they to come from? Upon my word, do you know what I should do in your place? I should not think twice, I should just sell seven or eight good-for-nothing pictures and put up some of those instead that are standing in your closet with their faces to the wall for want of room. One picture or another, what difference does it make?"

"Und vy?"

"He is so cunning. It is his illness, for he is a lamb when he is well. He is capable of getting up and prying about; and if by any chance he went into the salon, he is so weak that he could not go beyond the door; he would see that they were all still there."

"Drue!"

"And when he is quite well, we will tell him about the sale. And if you wish to confess, throw it all upon me, say that you were obliged to pay me. Come! I have a broad back—"

"I cannot tispose of dings dot are not mine," the good German answered simply.

"Very well. I will summons you, you and M. Pons."

"It vould kill him—"

"Take your choice! Dear me, sell the pictures and tell him about it afterward . . . you can show him the summons—"

"Ver' goot. Summons us. Dot shall pe mine excuse. I shall show him der chudgment."

Mme. Cibot went down to the court, and that very day at seven o'clock she called to Schmucke. Schmucke found himself confronted with M. Tabareau the bailiff, who called upon him to pay. Schmucke made answer, trembling from head to foot, and was forthwith summoned, together with Pons, to appear in the county court to hear judgment against him. The sight of the bailiff and a bit of stamped paper covered with scrawls produced such an effect upon Schmucke that he held out no longer.

"Sell die bictures," he said, with the tears in his eyes.

Next morning, at six o'clock, Elie Magus and Rémonencq took down the paintings of their choice. Two receipts for two thousand five hundred francs were made out in correct form:

"I, the undersigned, representing M. Pons, acknowledge the receipt of two thousand five hundred francs from M. Elie Magus for the four pictures sold to him, the said sum being appropriated to the use of M. Pons. The first picture, attributed to Dürer, is a portrait of a woman; the second, likewise a portrait, is of the Italian School; the third, a Dutch landscape by Breughel; and the fourth, a 'Holy Family,' by an unknown master of the Florentine School."

Rémonencq's receipt was worded in precisely the same way; a Greuze, a Claude Lorraine, a Rubens, and a Van Dyck being disguised as pictures of the French and Flemish schools.

"Der monny makes me beleef dot the chimcracks haf some

value," said Schmucke when the five thousand francs were paid over.

"They are worth something," said Rémonencq. "I would willingly give a hundred thousand francs for the lot."

Rémonencq, asked to do a trifling service, hung eight pictures of the proper size in the same frames, taking them from among the less valuable pictures in Schmucke's bedroom.

No sooner was Elie Magus in possession of the four great pictures than he went, taking La Cibot with him, under pretence of settling accounts. But he pleaded poverty, he found fault with the pictures, they needed rebacking, he offered La Cibot thirty thousand francs by way of commission, and finally dazzled her with the sheets of paper on which the Bank of France engraves the words "One thousand francs" in capital letters. Magus thereupon condemned Rémonencq to pay the like sum to La Cibot, by loaning him the money on the security of his four pictures, which he took with him as a guarantee. So glorious were they, that Magus could not bring himself to part with them, and next day he bought them of Rémonencq for six thousand francs over and above the original price, and an invoice was duly made out for the four. Mme. Cibot, the richer by sixty-eight thousand francs, once more swore her two accomplices to absolute secrecy. Then she asked the Jew's advice. She wanted to invest the money in such a way that no one should know of it.

"Buy shares in the Orleans Railway," said he; "they are thirty francs below par, you will double your capital in three years. They will give you scraps of paper, which you keep safe in a portfolio."

"Stay here, M. Magus. I will go and fetch the man of business who acts for M. Pons's family. He wants to know how much you will give for the whole bag of tricks upstairs. I will go for him now."

"If only she were a widow!" said Rémonencq when she was gone. "She would just suit me; she will have plenty of money now—"

"Especially if she puts her money into the Orléans Railway; she will double her capital in two years' time. I have put all my poor little savings into it," added the Jew, "for my daughter's portion.—Come, let us take a turn on the boulevard until this lawyer arrives."

"Cibot is very bad as it is," continued Rémonencq; "if it should please God to take him to Himself, I should have a famous wife to keep a shop; I could set up on a large scale—"

"Good-day, M. Fraasier," La Cibot began in an ingratiating tone as she entered her legal adviser's office. "Why, what is this that your porter has been telling me? are you going to move?"

"Yes, my dear Mme. Cibot. I am taking the first floor above Dr. Poulain, and trying to borrow two or three thousand francs so as to furnish the place properly; it is very nice, upon my word, the landlord has just papered and painted it. I am acting, as I told you, in Président de Marville's interests and yours. . . . I am not a solicitor now; I mean to have my name entered on the roll of barristers, and I must be well lodged. A barrister in Paris cannot have his name on the rolls unless he has decent furniture and books and the like. I am a doctor of law, I have kept my terms, and have powerful interest already. . . . Well, how are we getting on?"

"Perhaps you would accept my savings," said La Cibot. "I have put them in the savings bank. I have not much, only three thousand francs, the fruits of twenty-five years of stinting and scraping. You might give me a bill of exchange, as Rémonencq says; for I am ignorant myself, I only know what they tell me."

"No. It is against the rules of the guild for a barrister (*avocat*) to put his name to a bill. I will give you a receipt, bearing interest at five per cent per annum, on the understanding that if I make an income of twelve hundred francs for you out of old Pons's estate you will cancel it."

La Cibot, caught in the trap, uttered not a word.

"Silence gives consent," Fraisier continued. "Let me have it to-morrow morning."

"Oh! I am quite willing to pay fees in advance," said La Cibot; "it is one way of making sure of my money."

Fraisier nodded. "How are we getting on?" he repeated. "I saw Poulain yesterday; you are hurrying your invalid along, it seems. . . . One more scene such as yesterday's, and gall-stones will form. Be gentle with him, my dear Mme. Cibot, do not lay up remorse for yourself. Life is not too long."

"Just let me alone with your remorse! Are you going to talk about the guillotine again? M. Pons is a contrary old thing. You don't know him. It is he that bothers me. There is not a more cross-grained man alive; his relations are in the right of it, he is sly, revengeful, and contrary. . . . M. Magus has come, as I told you, and is waiting to see you."

"Right! I will be there as soon as you. Your income depends upon the price the collection will fetch. If it brings in eight hundred thousand francs, you shall have fifteen hundred francs a year. It is a fortune."

"Very well. I will tell them to value the things on their consciences."

An hour later, Pons was fast asleep. The doctor had ordered a soothing draught, which Schmucke administered, all unconscious that La Cibot had doubled the dose. Fraisier, Rémonencq, and Magus, three gallows-birds, were examining the seventeen hundred different objects which formed the old musician's collection, one by one.

Schmucke had gone to bed. The three kites, drawn by the scent of a corpse, were masters of the field.

"Make no noise," said La Cibot whenever Magus went into ecstasies or explained the value of some work of art to Rémonencq. The dying man slept on in the neighboring room, while greed in four different forms appraised the treas-

ures that he must leave behind, and waited impatiently for him to die—a sight to wring the heart.

Three hours went by before they had finished the salon.

“On an average,” said the grimy old Jew, “everything here is worth a thousand francs.”

“Seventeen hundred thousand francs!” exclaimed Fraasier in bewilderment.

“Not to me,” Magus answered promptly, and his eyes grew dull. “I would not give more than a hundred thousand francs myself for the collection. You cannot tell how long you may keep a thing on hand. . . . There are masterpieces that wait ten years for a buyer, and meanwhile the purchase-money is doubled by compound interest. Still, I should pay cash.”

“There is stained glass in the other room, as well as enamels and miniatures and gold and silver snuff-boxes,” put in Rémonencq.

“Can they be seen?” inquired Fraasier.

“I’ll see if he is sound asleep,” replied La Cibot. She made a sign, and the three birds of prey came in.

“There are masterpieces yonder!” said Magus, indicating the salon, every bristle of his white beard twitching as he spoke. “But the riches are here! And what riches! Kings have nothing more glorious in royal treasuries.”

Rémonencq’s eyes lighted up till they glowed like carbuncles at the sight of the gold snuff-boxes. Fraasier, cool and calm as a serpent, or some snake-creature with the power of rising erect, stood with his viper’s head stretched out, in such an attitude as a painter would choose for Mephistopheles. The three covetous beings, thirsting for gold as devils thirst for the dew of heaven, looked simultaneously, as it chanced, at the owner of all this wealth. Some nightmare troubled Pons; he stirred, and suddenly, under the influence of those diabolical glances, he opened his eyes with a shrill cry.

“Thieves! . . . There they are! . . . Help! Murder! Help!”

The nightmare was evidently still upon him, for he sat

up in bed, staring before him with blank, wide-open eyes, and had not power to move.

Elie Magus and Rémonencq made for the door, but a word glued them to the spot.

"*Magus* here! . . . I am betrayed!"

Instinctively the sick man had known that his beloved pictures were in danger, a thought that touched him at least as closely as any dread for himself, and he awoke. Fraasier meanwhile did not stir.

"Mme. Cibot! who is that gentleman?" cried Pons, shivering at the sight.

"Goodness me! how could I put him out of the door?" she inquired, with a wink and gesture for Fraasier's benefit. "This gentleman came just a minute ago, from your family."

Fraasier could not conceal his admiration for La Cibot.

"Yes, sir," he said, "I have come on behalf of Mme. la Présidente de Marville, her husband, and her daughter, to express their regret. They learned quite by accident that you are ill, and they would like to nurse you themselves. They want you to go to Marville and get well there. Mme. la Vicomtesse Popinot, the little Cécile that you love so much, will be your nurse. She took your part with her mother. She convinced Mme. de Marville that she had made a mistake."

"So my next-of-kin have sent you to me, have they?" Pons exclaimed indignantly, "and sent the best judge and expert in all Paris with you to show you the way? Oh! a nice commission!" he cried, bursting into wild laughter. "You have come to value my pictures and curiosities, my snuff-boxes and miniatures! . . . Make your valuation. You have a man there who understands everything, and more—he can buy everything, for he is a millionaire ten times over. . . . My dear relatives will not have long to wait," he added with bitter irony, "they have choked the last breath out of me. . . . Ah! Mme. Cibot, you said you were a mother to me, and you bring dealers into the house, and

my competitor and the Camusots, while I am asleep! . . . Get out, all of you!—”

The unhappy man was beside himself with anger and fear; he rose from the bed and stood upright, a gaunt, wasted figure.

“Take my arm, sir,” said La Cibot, rushing to the rescue, lest Pons should fall. “Pray calm yourself, the gentlemen are gone.”

“I want to see the salon . . .” said the death-stricken man. La Cibot made a sign to the three ravens to take flight. Then she caught up Pons as if he had been a feather, and put him in bed again, in spite of his cries. When she saw that he was quite helpless and exhausted, she went to shut the door on the staircase. The three who had done Pons to death were still on the landing; La Cibot told them to wait. She heard Fraisiér say to Magus:

“Let me have it in writing, and sign it, both of you. Undertake to pay nine hundred thousand francs in cash for M. Pons’s collection, and we will see about putting you in the way of making a handsome profit.”

With that he said something to La Cibot in a voice so low that the others could not catch it, and went down after the two dealers to the porter’s room.

“Have they gone, Mme. Cibot?” asked the unhappy Pons, when she came back again.

“Gone? . . . who?” asked she.

“Those men.”

“What men? There, now! you have seen men,” said she. “You have just had a raving fit; if it hadn’t been for me you would have gone out of the window, and now you are still talking of men in the room. . . . Is it always to be like this?”

“What! was there not a gentleman here just now, saying that my relatives had sent him?”

“Will you still stand me out?” said she. “Upon my word, do you know where you ought to be sent?—To the asylum at Charenton. You see men—”

"Elie Magus, Rémonencq, and—"

"Oh! as for Rémonencq, you may have seen *him*, for he came up to tell me that my poor Cibot is so bad that I must clear out of this and come down. My Cibot comes first, you see. When my husband is ill, I can think of nobody else. Try to keep quiet and sleep for a couple of hours; I have sent for Dr. Poulain, and I will come up with him. . . . Take a drink and be good—"

"Then was there no one in the room just now, when I waked? . . ."

"No one," said she. "You must have seen M. Rémonencq in one of your looking-glasses."

"You are right, Mme. Cibot," said Pons, meek as a lamb.

"Well, now you are sensible again. . . . Good-by, my cherub; keep quiet, I shall be back again in a minute."

When Pons heard the outer door close upon her, he summoned up all his remaining strength to rise.

"They are cheating me," he muttered to himself, "they are robbing me! Schmucke is a child that would let them tie him up in a sack."

The terrible scene had seemed so real, it could not be a dream, he thought; a desire to throw light upon the puzzle excited him; he managed to reach the door, opened it after many efforts, and stood on the threshold of his salon. There they were—his dear pictures, his statues, his Florentine bronzes, his porcelain; the sight of them revived him. The old collector walked in his dressing-gown along the narrow spaces between the credence-tables and the side-boards that lined the wall; his feet bare, his head on fire. His first glance of ownership told him that everything was there; he turned to go back to bed again, when he noticed that a Greuze portrait looked out of the frame that had held Sebastian del Piombo's "Templar." Suspicion flashed across his brain, making his dark thoughts apparent to him, as a flash of lightning marks the outlines of the cloud-bars on a stormy sky. He looked round for the eight capital pictures of the collection; each one of them was replaced by another.

A dark film suddenly overspread his eyes; his strength failed him; he fell fainting upon the polished floor.

So heavy was the swoon that for two hours he lay as he fell, till Schmucke awoke and went to see his friend, and found him lying unconscious in the salon. With endless pains Schmucke raised the half-dead body and laid it on the bed; but when he came to question the death-stricken man, and saw the look in the dull eyes and heard the vague, inarticulate words, the good German, so far from losing his head, rose to the very heroism of friendship. Man and child as he was, with the pressure of despair came the inspiration of a mother's tenderness, a woman's love. He warmed towels (he found towels!), he wrapped them about Pons's hands, he laid them over the pit of the stomach; he took the cold, moist forehead in his hands, he summoned back life with a might of will worthy of Apollonius of Tyana, laying kisses on his friend's eyelids like some Mary bending over the dead Christ, in a *pietà* carved in bass-relief by some great Italian sculptor. The divine effort, the outpouring of one life into another, the work of mother and of lover, was crowned with success. In half an hour the warmth revived Pons; he became himself again, the hues of life returned to his eyes, suspended faculties gradually resumed their play under the influence of artificial heat. Schmucke gave him balm-water with a little wine in it; the spirit of life spread through the body; intelligence lighted up the forehead so short a while ago insensible as a stone; and Pons knew that he had been brought back to life, by what sacred devotion, what might of friendship!

"But for you I should die," he said, and as he spoke he felt the good German's tears falling on his face. Schmucke was laughing and crying at once.

Poor Schmucke! he had waited for those words with a frenzy of hope as costly as the frenzy of despair; and now his strength utterly failed him, he collapsed like a rent balloon. It was his turn to fall; he sank into the easy-chair, clasped his hands, and thanked God in fervent prayer. For

him a miracle had just been wrought. He put no belief in the efficacy of the prayer of his deeds; the miracle had been wrought by God in direct answer to his cry. And yet that miracle was a natural effect, such as medical science often records.

A sick man, surrounded by those who love him, nursed by those who wish earnestly that he should live, will recover (other things being equal), when another patient tended by hirelings will die. Doctors decline to see unconscious magnetism in this phenomenon; for them it is the result of intelligent nursing, of exact obedience to their orders; but many a mother knows the virtue of such ardent projection of strong, unceasing prayer.

"My good Schmucke—"

"Say nodings; I shall hear you mit mein heart . . . rest, rest!" said Schmucke, smiling at him.

"Poor friend, noble creature, child of God living in God! . . . The one being that has loved me. . . ." The words came out with pauses between them; there was a new note, a something never heard before, in Pons's voice. All the soul, so soon to take flight, found utterance in the words that filled Schmucke with happiness almost like a lover's rapture.

"Yes, yes. I shall be shtrong as a lion. I shall vork for two!"

"Listen, my good, my faithful, adorable friend. Let me speak, I have not much time left. I am a dead man. I cannot recover from these repeated shocks."

Schmucke was crying like a child.

"Just listen," continued Pons, "and cry afterward. As a Christian, you must submit. I have been robbed. It is La Cibot's doing. . . . I ought to open your eyes before I go; you know nothing of life. . . . Somebody has taken away eight of the pictures, and they were worth a great deal of money."

"Vorgife me—I sold dem."

"You sold them?"

"Yes, I," said poor Schmucke. "Dey summoned us to der court—"

"Summoned? . . . Who summoned us?"

"Wait," said Schmucke. He went for the bit of stamped paper left by the bailiff, and gave it to Pons. Pons read the scrawl through with close attention, then he let the paper drop and lay quite silent for a while. A close observer of the work of men's hands, unheeding so far of the workings of the brain, Pons finally counted out the threads of the plot woven about him by La Cibot. The artist's fire, the intellect that won the Roman scholarship—all his youth, came back to him for a little.

"My good Schmucke," he said at last, "you must do as I tell you, and obey like a soldier. Listen! go downstairs into the lodge and tell that abominable woman that I should like to see the person sent to me by my cousin the President; and that unless he comes, I shall leave my collection to the Musée. Say that a will is in question."

Schmucke went on his errand; but at the first word, La Cibot answered by a smile.

"My good M. Schmucke, our dear invalid has had a delirious fit; he thought that there were men in the room. On my word as an honest woman, no one has come from the family."

Schmucke went back with this answer, which he repeated word for word.

"She is cleverer, more astute and cunning and wily, than I thought," said Pons with a smile. "She lies even in her room. Imagine it! This morning she brought a Jew here, Elie Magus by name, and Rémonencq, and a third whom I do not know, more terrific than the other two put together. She meant to make a valuation while I was asleep; I happened to wake, and saw them all three, estimating the worth of my snuff-boxes. The stranger said, indeed, that the Camusots had sent him here; I spoke to him. . . . That shameless woman stood me out that I was dreaming! . . . My good Schmucke, it was not a dream. I heard the man

perfectly plainly; he spoke to me. . . . The two dealers took fright and made for the door. . . . I thought that La Cibot would contradict herself—the experiment failed. . . . I will lay another snare, and trap the wretched woman. . . . Poor Schmucke, you think that La Cibot is an angel; and for this month past she has been killing me by inches to gain her covetous ends. I would not believe that a woman who served us faithfully for years could be so wicked. That doubt has been my ruin. . . . How much did the eight pictures fetch?"

"Vif tausend vranes."

"Good heavens! they were worth twenty times as much!" cried Pons; "the gems of the collection! I have not time now to institute proceedings; and if I did, you would figure in court as the dupe of those rascals. . . . A lawsuit would be the death of you. You do not know what justice means—a court of justice is a sink of iniquity. . . . At the sight of such horrors, a soul like yours would give way. And besides, you will have enough. The pictures cost me forty thousand francs. I have had them for thirty-six years. . . . Oh, we have been robbed with surprising dexterity. I am on the brink of the grave, I care for nothing now but thee—for thee, the best soul under the sun. . . .

"I will not have you plundered; all that I have is yours. So you must trust nobody, Schmucke, you that have never suspected any one in your life. I know God watches over you, but He may forget for one moment, and you will be seized like a vessel among pirates. . . . La Cibot is a monster! She is killing me; and you think her an angel! You shall see what she is. Go and ask her to give you the name of a notary, and I will show you her with her hand in the bag."

Schmucke listened as if Pons proclaimed an apocalypse. Could so depraved a creature as La Cibot exist? If Pons was right, it seemed to imply that there was no God in the world. He went down again to Mme. Cibot.

"Mein boor vriend Bons feel so ill," he said, "dat he vish to make his vill. Go und pring ein nodary."

This was said in the hearing of several persons, for Cibot's life was despaired of. Rémonencq and his sister, two women from neighboring porters' lodges, two or three servants, and the lodger from the first floor on the side next the street, were all standing outside in the gateway.

"Oh! you can just fetch a notary yourself, and have your will made as you please," cried La Cibot, with tears in her eyes. "My poor Cibot is dying, and it is no time to leave him. I would give all the Ponses in the world to save Cibot, that has never given me an ounce of unhappiness in these thirty years since we were married."

And in she went, leaving Schmucke in confusion.

"Is M. Pons really seriously ill, sir?" asked the first-floor lodger, one Jolivard, a clerk in the registrar's office at the Palais de Justice.

"He nearly died chust now," said Schmucke, with deep sorrow in his voice.

"M. Trognon lives near by in the Rue Saint-Louis," said M. Jolivard, "he is the notary of the quarter."

"Would you like me to go for him?" asked Rémonencq.

"I should pe fery glad," said Schmucke: "for gif Montame Zipod cannot pe mit mine vriend, I shall not vish to leaf him in der shtate he is in—"

"Mme. Cibot told us that he was going out of his mind," resumed Jolivard.

"Bons! out off his mind!" cried Schmucke, terror-stricken by the idea. "Nefer vas he so clear in der head . . . dat is chust der reason vy I am anxious for him."

The little group of persons listened to the conversation with a very natural curiosity, which stamped the scene upon their memories. Schmucke did not know Fraasier, and could not note his satanic countenance and glittering eyes. But two words whispered by Fraasier in La Cibot's ear had prompted a daring piece of acting, somewhat beyond La Cibot's range, it may be, though she played her part throughout in a masterly style. To make others believe that the dying man was out of his mind—it was the very corner-stone of the edifice

reared by the petty lawyer. The morning's incident had done Fraasier good service; but for him, La Cibot in her trouble might have fallen into the snare innocently spread by Schmucke, when he asked her to send back the person sent by the family.

Rémonencq saw Dr. Poulain coming toward them, and asked no better than to vanish. The fact was that for the last ten days the Auvergnat had been playing Providence in a manner singularly displeasing to Justice, which claims the monopoly of that part. He had made up his mind to rid himself at all costs of the one obstacle in his way to happiness, and happiness for him meant capital trebled and marriage with the irresistibly charming portress. He had watched the little tailor drinking his herb-tea, and a thought struck him. He would convert the ailment into mortal sickness; his stock of old metals supplied him with the means.

One morning as he leaned against the door-post, smoking his pipe and dreaming of that fine shop on the Boulevard de la Madeleine where Mme. Cibot, gorgeously arrayed, should some day sit enthroned, his eyes fell upon a copper disk, about the size of a five-franc piece, covered thickly with verdigris. The economical idea of using Cibot's medicine to clean the disk immediately occurred to him. He fastened the thing to a bit of twine, and came over every morning to inquire for tidings of his friend the tailor, timing his visit during La Cibot's visit to her gentlemen upstairs. He dropped the disk into the tumbler, allowed it to steep there while he talked, and drew it out again by the string when he went away.

The trace of tarnished copper, commonly called verdigris, poisoned the wholesome draught; a minute dose administered by stealth did incalculable mischief. Behold the results of this criminal homeopathy! On the third day poor Cibot's hair came out, his teeth were loosened in their sockets, his whole system was deranged by a scarcely perceptible trace of poison. Dr. Poulain racked his brains. He was enough of a man of science to see that some destruc-

tive agent was at work. He privately carried off the decoction, analyzed it himself, but found nothing. It so chanced that Rémonencq had taken fright and omitted to dip the disk in the tumbler that day.

Then Dr. Poulain fell back on himself and science and got out of the difficulty with a theory. A sedentary life in a damp room; a cramped position before the barred window—these conditions had vitiated the blood in the absence of proper exercise, especially as the patient continually breathed an atmosphere saturated with the fetid exhalations of the gutter. The Rue de Normandie is one of the old-fashioned streets that slope toward the middle; the municipal authorities of Paris as yet have laid on no water supply to flush the central kennel which drains the houses on either side, and as a result a stream of filthy ooze meanders among the cobble-stones, filters into the soil, and produces the mud peculiar to the city. La Cibot came and went; but her husband, a hard-working man, sat day in day out like a fakir on the table in the window, till his knee-joints were stiffened, the blood stagnated in his body, and his legs grew so thin and crooked that he almost lost the use of them. The deep copper tint of the man's complexion naturally suggested that he had been out of health for a very long time. The wife's good health and the husband's illness seemed to the doctor to be satisfactorily accounted for by this theory.

"Then what is the matter with my poor Cibot?" asked the portress.

"My dear Mme. Cibot, he is dying of the porter's disease," said the doctor. "Incurable vitiation of the blood is evident from the general anæmic condition."

No one had anything to gain by a crime so objectless. Dr. Poulain's first suspicions were effaced by this thought. Who could have any possible interest in Cibot's death? His wife?—the doctor saw her taste the herb-tea as she sweetened it. Crimes which escape social vengeance are many enough, and as a rule they are of this order—to wit, murders committed without any startling sign of violence, without

bloodshed, bruises, marks of strangling, without any bungling of the business, in short; if there seems to be no motive for the crime, it most likely goes unpunished, especially if the death occurs among the poorer classes. Murder is almost always denounced by its advanced guards, by hatred or greed well known to those under whose eyes the whole matter has passed. But in the case of the Cibots no one save the doctor had any interest in discovering the actual cause of death. The little copper-faced tailor's wife adored her husband; he had no money and no enemies; La Cibot's fortune and the marine-store dealer's motives were alike hidden in the shade. Poulain knew the portress and her way of thinking perfectly well; he thought her capable of tormenting Pons, but he saw that she had neither motive enough nor wit enough for murder; and besides—every time the doctor came and she gave her husband a draught, she took a spoonful herself. Poulain himself, the only person who might have thrown light on the matter, inclined to believe that this was one of the unaccountable freaks of disease, one of the astonishing exceptions which make medicine so perilous a profession. And in truth, the little tailor's unwholesome life and unsanitary surroundings had unfortunately brought him to such a pass that the trace of copper-poisoning was like the last straw. Gossips and neighbors took it upon themselves to explain the sudden death, and no suspicion of blame lighted upon Rémonencq.

"Oh! this long time past I have said that M. Cibot was not well," cried one.

"He worked too hard, he did," said another; "he heated his blood."

"He would not listen to me," put in a neighbor; "I advised him to walk out of a Sunday and keep Saint Monday; two days in the week is not too much for amusement."

In short, the gossip of the quarter, the tell-tale voice to which Justice, in the person of the commissary of police, the king of the poorer classes, lends an attentive ear—gossip explained the little tailor's demise in a perfectly satisfactory

manner. Yet M. Poulain's pensive air and uneasy eyes embarrassed Rémonencq not a little, and at sight of the doctor he offered eagerly to go in search of M. Trognon, Fraisier's acquaintance. Fraisier turned to La Cibot to say in a low voice, "I shall come back again as soon as the will is made. In spite of your sorrow, you must look out for squalls." Then he slipped away like a shadow and met his friend the doctor.

"Ah, Poulain!" he exclaimed, "it is all right. We are safe! I will tell you about it to-night. Look out a post that will suit you, you shall have it! For my own part, I am a justice of the peace. Tabareau will not refuse me now for a son-in-law. And as for you, I will undertake that you shall marry Mlle. Vitel, granddaughter of our justice of the peace."

Fraisier left Poulain reduced to dumb bewilderment by these wild words, bounced like a ball into the boulevard, hailed an omnibus, and was set down ten minutes later by the modern coach at the corner of the Rue de Choiseul. By this time it was nearly four o'clock. Fraisier felt quite sure of a word in private with the Présidente, for officials seldom leave the Palais de Justice before five o'clock.

Mme. de Marville's reception of him assured Fraisier that M. Lebœuf had kept the promise made to Mme. Vatinelle and spoken favorably of the sometime attorney at Mantes. Amélie's manner was almost caressing. So might the Duchesse de Montpensier have treated Jacques Clément. The petty attorney was a knife to her hand. But when Fraisier produced the joint-letter signed by Elie Magus and Rémonencq offering the sum of nine hundred thousand francs in cash for Pons's collection, then the Présidente looked at her man of business and the gleam of the money flashed from her eyes. That ripple of greed reached the attorney.

"M. le Président left a message with me," she said; "he hopes that you will dine with us to-morrow. It will be a family party. M. Godeschal, Desroches' successor and my attorney, will come to meet you, and Berthier, our notary,

and my daughter and son-in-law. After dinner, you and I and the notary and attorney will have the little consultation for which you ask, and I will give you full powers. The two gentlemen will do as you require and act upon your inspiration; and see that *everything* goes well. You shall have a power of attorney from M. de Marville as soon as you want it."

"I shall want it on the day of the decease."

"It shall be in readiness."

"Mme. la Présidente, if I ask for a power of attorney, and would prefer that your attorney's name should not appear, I wish it less in my own interest than in yours. . . . When I give myself, it is without reserve. And in return, madame, I ask the same fidelity; I ask my patrons (I do not venture to call you my clients) to put the same confidence in me. You may think that in acting thus I am trying to fasten upon this affair—no, no, madame; there may be reprehensible things done; with an inheritance in view one is dragged on . . . especially with nine hundred thousand francs in the balance. Well now you could not disavow a man like Maitre Godeschal, honesty itself, but you can throw all the blame on the back of a miserable pettifogging lawyer—"

Mme. Camusot de Marville looked admiringly at Fraasier.

"You ought to go very high," said she, "or sink very low. In your place, instead of asking to hide myself away as a justice of the peace, I would aim at a crown attorney's appointment—at, say, Mantes!—and make a great career for myself."

"Let me have my way, madame. The post of justice of the peace is an ambling pad for M. Vitel; for me it shall be a war-horse."

And in this way the Présidente proceeded to a final confidence.

"You seem to be so completely devoted to our interests," she began, "that I will tell you about the difficulties of our position and our hopes. The President's great desire, ever

since a match was projected between his daughter and an adventurer who recently started a bank—the President's wish, I say, has been to round out the Marville estate with some grazing land, at that time in the market. We dispossessed ourselves of fine property, as you know, to settle it upon our daughter; but I wish very much, my daughter being an only child, to buy all that remains of the grass land. Part has been sold already. The estate belongs to an Englishman who is returning to England after a twenty years' residence in France. He built the most charming cottage in a delightful situation, between Marville Park and the meadows which once were part of the Marville lands; he bought up covers, copse, and gardens at fancy prices to make the grounds about the cottage. The house and its surroundings make a feature of the landscape, and it lies close to my daughter's park palings. The whole, land and house, should be bought for seven hundred thousand francs, for the net revenue is about twenty thousand francs. But if Mr. Wadman finds out that *we* think of buying it, he is sure to add another two or three hundred thousand francs to the price; for he will lose money if the house counts for nothing, as it usually does when you buy land in the country—"

"Why, madame," Fraasier broke in, "in my opinion you can be so sure that the inheritance is yours that I will offer to act the part of purchaser for you. I will undertake that you shall have the land at the best possible price, and have a written engagement made out under private seal, like a contract to deliver goods. . . . I will go to the Englishman in the character of buyer. I understand that sort of thing; it was my specialty at Mantes. Vatinelle doubled the value of his practice, while I worked in his name."

"Hence your connection with little Madame Vatinelle. He must be very well off—"

"But Mme. Vatinelle has expensive tastes. . . . So be easy, madame—I will serve you up the Englishman done to a turn—"

"If you can manage that you will have eternal claims

to my gratitude. Good-day, my dear M. Fraisier. Till to-morrow—”

Fraisier went. His parting bow was a degree less cringing than on the first occasion.

“I am to dine to-morrow with President de Marville!” he said to himself. “Come now, I have these folk in my power. Only, to be absolute master, I ought to be the German’s legal adviser in the person of Tabareau, the justice’s clerk. Tabareau will not have me now for his daughter, his only daughter, but he will give her to me when I am a justice of the peace. I shall be eligible. Mlle. Tabareau, that tall consumptive girl with the red hair, has a house in the Place Royale in right of her mother. At her father’s death she is sure to come in for six thousand livres per annum as well. She is not handsome; but, good Lord, if you step from nothing at all to an income of eighteen thousand francs, you must not look too hard at the plank.”

As he went back to the Rue de Normandie by way of the boulevards, he dreamed out his golden dream; he gave himself up to the happiness of the thought that he should never know want again. He would marry his friend Poulain to Mlle. Vitel, the daughter of the justice of the peace; together, he and his friend the doctor would reign like kings in the quarter; he would carry all the elections—municipal, military, or political. The boulevards seem short if, while you pace afoot, you mount your ambition on the steed of fancy in this way.

Schmucke meanwhile went back to his friend Pons with the news that Cibot was dying, and Rémonencq gone in search of M. Trognon the notary. Pons was struck by the name. It had come up again and again in La Cibot’s interminable talk, and La Cibot always recommended him as honesty incarnate. And with that a luminous idea occurred to Pons, in whom mistrust had grown paramount since the morning, an idea which completed his plan for outwitting La Cibot and unmasking her completely for the too-credulous Schmucke.

So many unexpected things had happened that day that poor Schmucke was quite bewildered. Pons took his friend's hand.

"There must be a good deal of confusion in the house, Schmucke; if the porter is at death's door, we are almost free for a minute or two; that is to say, there will be no spies—for we are watched, you may be sure of that. Go out, take a cab, go to the theatre, and tell Mlle. Héloïse Brisetout that I should like to see her before I die. Ask her to come here to-night when she leaves the theatre. Then go to your friends Brunner and Schwab and beg them to come to-morrow morning at nine o'clock to inquire after me; let them come up as if they were just passing by and called in to see me."

The old artist felt that he was dying, and this was the scheme that he forged. He meant Schmucke to be his universal legatee. To protect Schmucke from any possible legal quibbles he proposed to dictate his will to a notary in the presence of witnesses, lest his sanity should be called in question and the Camusots should attempt upon that pretext to dispute the will. At the name of Trognon he caught a glimpse of machinations of some kind; perhaps a flaw purposely inserted, or premeditated treachery on La Cibot's part. He would prevent this. Trognon should dictate a holograph will which should be signed and deposited in a sealed envelope in a drawer. Then Schmucke, hidden in one of the cabinets in his alcove, should see La Cibot search for the will, find it, open the envelope, read it through, and seal it again. Next morning, at nine o'clock, he would cancel the will and make a new one in the presence of two notaries, everything in due form and order. La Cibot had treated him as a madman and a visionary; he saw what this meant—he saw the Présidente's hate and greed, her revenge in La Cibot's behavior. In the sleepless hours and lonely days of the last two months, the poor man had sifted the events of his past life.

It has been the wont of sculptors, ancient and modern, to

set a tutelary genius with a lighted torch upon either side of a tomb. Those torches that light up the paths of death throw light for dying eyes upon the spectacle of a life's mistakes and sins; the carved stone figures express great ideas, they are symbols of a fact in human experience. The agony of death has its own wisdom. Not seldom a simple girl, scarcely more than a child, will grow wise with the experience of a hundred years, will gain prophetic vision, judge her family, and see clearly through all pretences, at the near approach of Death. Herein lies Death's poetry. But, strange and worthy of remark it is, there are two manners of death.

The poetry of prophecy, the gift of seeing clearly into the future or the past, only belongs to those whose bodies are stricken, to those who die by the destruction of the organs of physical life. Consumptive patients, for instance, or those who die of gangrene like Louis XIV., of fever like Pons, of a stomach complaint like Mme. de Mortsauf, or of wounds received in the full tide of life like soldiers on the battlefield—all these may possess this supreme lucidity to the full; their deaths fill us with surprise and wonder. But many, on the other hand, die of *intellighential* diseases, as they may be called; of maladies seated in the brain or in that nervous system which acts as a kind of purveyor of thought fuel—and these die wholly, body and spirit are darkened together. The former are spirits deserted by the body, realizing for us our ideas of the spirits of Scripture; the latter are bodies untenanted by a spirit.

Too late the virgin nature, the epicure-Cato, the righteous man almost without sin, was discovering the Président's real character—the sac of gall that did duty for her heart. He knew the world now that he was about to leave it, and for the past few hours he had risen gayly to his part, like a joyous artist finding a pretext for caricature and laughter in everything. The last links that bound him to life, the chains of admiration, the strong ties that bind the art lover to Art's masterpieces, had been snapped that morning. When Pons knew that La Cibot had robbed him, he bade

farewell, like a Christian, to the pomps and vanities of Art, to his collection, to all his old friendships with the makers of so many fair things. Our forefathers counted the day of death as a Christian festival, and in something of the same spirit Pons's thoughts turned to the coming end. In his tender love he tried to protect Schmucke when he should be low in the grave. It was this father's thought that led him to fix his choice upon the leading lady of the ballet. Mlle. Brisetout should help him to baffle surrounding treachery, and those who in all probability would never forgive his innocent universal legatee.

Héloïse Brisetout was one of the few natures that remain true in a false position. She was an opera-girl of the school of Josépha and Jenny Cadine, capable of playing any trick on a paying adorer; yet she was a good comrade, dreading no power on earth, accustomed as she was to see the weak side of the strong and to hold her own with the police at the scarcely idyllic Bal de Mabilles and the carnival.

"If she asked for my place for Garangeot, she will think that she owes me a good turn by so much the more," said Pons to himself.

Thanks to the prevailing confusion in the porter's lodge, Schmucke succeeded in getting out of the house. He returned with the utmost speed, fearing to leave Pons too long alone. M. Trognon reached the house just as Schmucke came in. Albeit Cibot was dying, his wife came upstairs with the notary, brought him into the bedroom, and withdrew, leaving Schmucke and Pons with M. Trognon; but she left the door ajar, and went no further than the next room. Providing herself with a little hand-glass of curious workmanship, she took up her station in the doorway, so that she could not only hear but see all that passed at the supreme moment.

"Sir," said Pons, "I am in the full possession of my faculties, unfortunately for me, for I feel that I am about to die; and doubtless, by the will of God, I shall be spared nothing of the agony of death. This is M. Schmucke"—(the

notary bowed to M. Schmucke)—“my one friend on earth,” continued Pons. “I wish to make him my universal legatee. Now, tell me how to word the will, so that my friend, who is a German and knows nothing of French law, may succeed to my possessions without any dispute.”

“Anything is liable to be disputed, sir,” said the notary; “that is the drawback of human justice. But in the matter of wills, there are wills so drafted that they cannot be upset—”

“In what way?” queried Pons.

“If a will is made in the presence of a notary, and before witnesses who can swear that the testator was in the full possession of his faculties; and if the testator has neither wife nor children, nor father nor mother—”

“I have none of these; all my affection is centred upon my dear friend Schmucke here.”

The tears overflowed Schmucke's eyes.

“Then, if you have none but distant relatives, the law leaves you free to dispose of both personalty and real estate as you please, so long as you bequeath them for no unlawful purpose; for you must have come across cases of wills disputed on account of the testator's eccentricities. A will made in the presence of a notary is considered to be authentic; for the person's identity is established, the notary certifies that the testator was sane at the time, and there can be no possible dispute over the signature.—Still, a holograph will, properly and clearly worded, is quite as safe.”

“I have decided, for reasons of my own, to make a holograph will at your dictation, and to deposit it with my friend here. Is this possible?”

“Quite possible,” said the notary. “Will you write? I will begin to dictate—”

“Schmucke, bring me my little Boule writing-desk.—Speak low, sir,” he added; “we may be overheard.”

“Just tell me, first of all, what you intend,” demanded the notary.

Ten minutes later La Cibot saw the notary look over the

will, while Schmucke lighted a taper (Pons watching her reflection all the while in a mirror). She saw the envelope sealed, saw Pons give it to Schmucke, and heard him say that it must be put away in a secret drawer in his bureau. Then the testator asked for the key, tied it to the corner of his handkerchief, and slipped it under his pillow.

The notary himself, by courtesy, was appointed executor. To him Pons left a picture of price, such a thing as the law permits a notary to receive. Trognon went out and came upon Mme. Cibot in the salon.

"Well, sir, did M. Pons remember me?"

"You do not expect a notary to betray secrets confided to him, my dear," returned M. Trognon. "I can only tell you this—there will be many disappointments, and some that are anxious after the money will be foiled. M. Pons has made a good and very sensible will, a patriotic will, which I highly approve."

La Cibot's curiosity, kindled by such words, reached an unimaginable pitch. She went downstairs and spent the night at Cibot's bedside, inwardly resolving that Mlle. Rémonencq should take her place toward two or three in the morning, when she would go up and have a look at the document.

Mlle. Brisetout's visit toward half-past ten that night seemed natural enough to La Cibot; but in her terror lest the ballet-girl should mention Gaudissart's gift of a thousand francs, she went upstairs with her, lavishing polite speeches and flattery as if Mlle. Héloïse had been a queen.

"Ah! my dear, you are much nicer here on your own ground than at the theatre," Héloïse remarked. "I advise you to keep to your employment."

Héloïse was splendidly dressed. Bixiou, her lover, had brought her in his carriage on the way to an evening party at Mariette's. It so fell out that the first-floor lodger, M. Chapoulot, a retired braid manufacturer from the Rue Saint-Denis, returning from the Ambigu-Comique with his wife and daughter, was dazzled by a vision of such a costume and such a charming woman upon their staircase.

"Who is that, Mme. Cibot?" asked Mme. Chapoulot.

"A no-better-than-she-should-be, a light-skirts that you may see half-naked any evening for a couple of francs," La Cibot answered in an undertone for Mme. Chapoulot's ear.

"Victorine!" called the braid manufacturer's wife, "let the lady pass, child."

The matron's alarm-signal was not lost upon Héloïse.

"Your daughter must be more inflammable than tinder, madame, if you are afraid that she will catch fire by touching me," she said.

M. Chapoulot waited on the landing. "She is uncommonly handsome off the stage," he remarked. Whereupon Mme. Chapoulot pinched him sharply and drove him indoors.

"Here is a second-floor lodger that has a mind to set up for being on the fourth floor," said Héloïse as she continued to climb.

"But mademoiselle is accustomed to going higher and higher."

"Well, old boy," said Héloïse, entering the bedroom and catching sight of the old musician's white, wasted face. "Well, old boy, so we are not very well? Everybody at the theatre is asking after you; but though one's heart may be in the right place, every one has his own affairs, you know, and cannot find time to go to see friends. Gaudissart talks of coming round every day, and every morning the tiresome management gets hold of him. Still, we are all of us fond of you—"

"Mme. Cibot," said the patient, "be so kind as to leave us; we want to talk about the theatre and my post as conductor, with this lady. Schmucke, will you go to the door with Mme. Cibot?"

At a sign from Pons, Schmucke saw Mme. Cibot out at the door, and drew the bolts.

"Ah, that blackguard of a German! Is he spoiled too?" La Cibot said to herself as she heard the significant sounds. "That is M. Pons's doing; he taught him these disgusting tricks. . . . But you shall pay for this, my dears," she

thought as she went down the stairs. "Pooh! if that tight-rope dancer tells him about the thousand francs, I shall say that it is a farce."

She seated herself by Cibot's pillow. Cibot complained of a burning sensation in the stomach. Rémonencq had called in and given him a draught while his wife was upstairs.

As soon as Schmucke had dismissed La Cibot, Pons turned to the ballet-girl.

"Dear child, I can trust no one else to find me a notary, an honest man, and send him here to make my will to-morrow morning at half-past nine precisely. I want to leave all that I have to Schmucke. If he is persecuted, poor German that he is, I shall reckon upon the notary; the notary must defend him. And for that reason I must have a very wealthy notary, highly thought of, a man above the temptations to which pettifogging lawyers yield. He must succor my poor friend. I cannot trust Berthier, Cardot's successor. And you know so many people—"

"Oh! I have the very man for you," Héloïse broke in; "there is the notary that acts for Florine and the Comtesse du Bruel, Léopold Hannequin, a virtuous man that does not know what a *lorette* is! He is a sort of chance-come father—a good soul that will not let you play ducks and drakes with your earnings; I call him *Le Père aux Rats*, because he instils economical notions into the minds of all my friends. In the first place, my dear fellow, he has a private income of sixty thousand francs; and he is a notary of the real old sort, a notary while he walks or sleeps; his children must be little notaries and notaressees. He is a heavy, pedantic creature, and that's the truth; but on his own ground, he is not the man to flinch before any power in creation. . . . No woman ever got money out of him; he is a fossil pater-familias, his wife worships him and does not deceive him, although she is a notary's wife.—What more do you want? as a notary he has not his match in Paris. He is in the patriarchal style; not queer and amusing, as Cardot used to be with Malaga; but he will never decamp like little

What's-his-name that lived with Antonia. So I will send round my man to-morrow morning at eight o'clock. . . . You may sleep in peace. And I hope, in the first place, that you will get better, and make charming music for us again; and yet, after all, you see, life is very dreary—managers chisel you, and kings mizzle and ministers fizzle and rich folk economizzle.—Artists have nothing left *here*” (tapping her breast)—“it is a time to die in. Good-by, old boy.”

“Héloïse, of all things, I ask you to keep my counsel.”

“It is not a theatre affair,” she said; “it is sacred for an artist.”

“Who is your gentleman, child?”

“M. Baudoyer, the mayor of your arrondissement, a man as stupid as the late Crevel; Crevel once financed Gaudissart, you know, and a few days ago he died and left me nothing, not so much as a pot of pomatum. That made me say just now that this age of ours is something sickening.”

“What did he die of?”

“Of his wife. If he had stayed with me, he would be living now. Good-by, dear old boy. I am talking of going off, because I can see that you will be walking about the boulevards in a week or two, hunting up pretty little curiosities again. You are not ill; I never saw your eyes look so bright.” And she went, fully convinced that her protégé Garangeot would conduct the orchestra for good.

Every door stood ajar as she went downstairs. Every lodger, on tiptoe, watched the lady of the ballet pass on her way out. It was quite an event in the house.

Fraisier, like the bulldog that sets his teeth and never lets go, was on the spot. He stood beside La Cibot when Mlle. Brisetout passed under the gateway and asked for the door to be opened. Knowing that a will had been made, he had come to see how the land lay, for Maître Trognon, notary, had refused to say a syllable—Fraisier's questions were as fruitless as Mme. Cibot's. Naturally the ballet-girl's visit *in extremis* was not lost upon Fraisier; he vowed to himself that he would turn it to good account.

"My dear Mme. Cibot," he began, "now is the critical moment for you."

"Ah, yes . . . my poor Cibot!" said she. "When I think that he will not live to enjoy anything I may get—"

"It is a question of finding out whether M. Pons has left you anything at all; whether your name is mentioned or left out, in fact," he interrupted. "I represent the next-of-kin, and to them you must look in any case. It is a holograph will, and consequently very easy to upset.—Do you know where our man has put it?"

"In a secret drawer in his bureau, and he has the key of it. He tied it to a corner of his handkerchief, and put it under his pillow. I saw it all."

"Is the will sealed?"

"Yes, alas!"

"It is a criminal offence if you carry off a will and suppress it, but it is only a misdemeanor to look at it; and anyhow, what does it amount to? A peccadillo, and nobody will see you. Is your man a heavy sleeper?"

"Yes. But when you tried to see all the things and value them, he ought to have slept like a top, and yet he woke up. Still, I will see about it. I will take M. Schmucke's place about four o'clock this morning; and if you care to come, you shall have the will in your hands for ten minutes."

"Good. I will come up about four o'clock, and I will knock very softly—"

"Mlle. Rémonencq will take my place with Cibot. She will know, and open the door; but tap on the window, so as to rouse nobody in the house."

"Right," said Fraisier. "You will have a light, will you not? A candle will do."

At midnight poor Schmucke sat in his easy-chair, watching with a breaking heart that shrinking of the features that comes with death; Pons looked so worn out with the day's exertions that death seemed very near.

Presently Pons spoke. "I have just enough strength, I think, to last till to-morrow night," he said philosophically. "To-morrow night the death agony will begin. Poor Schmucke! As soon as the notary and your two friends are gone, go for our good Abbé Duplanty, the curate of Saint-François. Good man, he does not know that I am ill, and I wish to take the Holy Sacrament to-morrow at noon."

There was a long pause.

"God so willed it that life has not been as I dreamed," Pons resumed. "I should so have loved wife and children and home. . . . To be loved by a very few in some corner—that was my whole ambition! Life is hard for every one; I have seen people who had all that I wanted so much and could not have, and yet they were not happy. . . . Then at the end of my life, God put untold comfort in my way, when He gave me such a friend. . . . And one thing I have not to reproach myself with—that I have not known your worth nor appreciated you, my good Schmucke. . . . I have loved you with my whole heart, with all the strength of love that is in me. . . . Do not cry, Schmucke; I shall say no more if you cry, and it is so sweet to me to talk of ourselves to you. . . . If I had listened to you, I should not be dying. I should have left the world and broken off my habits, and then I should not have been wounded to death. And now, I want to think of no one but you at the last—"

"You are missdaken—"

"Do not contradict me—listen, dear friend. . . . You are as guileless and simple as a six-year-old child that has never left its mother; one honors you for it—it seems to me that God Himself must watch over such as you. But men are so wicked that I ought to warn you beforehand . . . and then you will lose your generous trust, your saintlike belief in others, the bloom of a purity of soul that only belongs to genius or to hearts like yours. . . . In a little while you will see Mme. Cibot, who left the door ajar and watched us closely while M. Trognon was here—in a little while you will see her

come for the will, as she believes it to be. . . . I expect the worthless creature will do her business this morning when she thinks you are asleep. Now, mind what I say, and carry out my instructions to the letter. . . . Are you listening?" asked the dying man.

But Schmucke was overcome with grief, his heart was throbbing painfully, his head fell back on the chair, he seemed to have lost consciousness.

"Yes," he answered, "I can hear, but it is as if you were doo huntert baces afay from me. . . . It seem to me dat I am going town into der grafe mit you," said Schmucke, crushed with pain.

He went over to the bed, took one of Pons's hands in both his own, and within himself put up a fervent prayer.

"What is that that you are mumbling in German?"

"I asked of Gott dat He would take us poth togedders to Himself!" Schmucke answered simply when he had finished his prayer.

Pons bent over—it was a great effort, for he was suffering intolerable pain; but he managed to reach Schmucke, and kissed him on the forehead, pouring out his soul, as it were, in benediction upon a nature that recalled the Lamb that lies at the foot of the Throne of God.

"See here, listen, my good Schmucke, you must do as dying people tell you—"

"I am lisdening."

"The little door in the recess in your bedroom opens into that closet."

"Yes, but it is blocked up mit bictures."

"Clear them away at once, without making too much noise."

"Yes."

"Clear a passage on both sides, so that you can pass from your room into mine.—Now, leave the door ajar.—When La Cibot comes to take your place (and she is capable of coming an hour earlier than usual), you can go away to bed as if nothing had happened, and look very tired. Try to look

sleepy. As soon as she settles down into the armchair, go into the closet, draw aside the muslin curtains over the glass door, and watch her. . . . Do you understand?"

"I oondershtand; you belief dat die pad voman is going to purn der vill."

"I do not know what she will do; but I am sure of this—that you will not take her for an angel afterward.—And now play for me; improvise and make me happy. It will divert your thoughts; your gloomy ideas will vanish, and for me the dark hours will be filled with your dreams. . . ."

Schmucke sat down to the piano. Here he was in his element; and in a few moments, musical inspiration, quickened by the pain with which he was quivering and the consequent irritation that followed, came upon the kindly German, and, after his wont, he was caught up and borne above the world. On one sublime theme after another he executed variations, putting into them sometimes Chopin's sorrow, Chopin's Rafael-like perfection; sometimes the stormy Dante's grandeur of Liszt—the two musicians who most nearly approach Paganini's temperament. When execution reaches this supreme degree, the executant stands beside the poet, as it were; he is to the composer as the actor is to the writer of plays, a divinely inspired interpreter of things divine. But that night, when Schmucke gave Pons an earnest of diviner symphonies, of that heavenly music for which Saint Cecilia let fall her instruments, he was at once Beethoven and Paganini, creator and interpreter. It was an outpouring of music inexhaustible as the nightingale's song—varied and full of delicate undergrowth as the forest flooded with her trills; sublime as the sky overhead. Schmucke played as he had never played before, and the soul of the old musician listening to him rose to ecstasy such as Rafael once painted in a picture which you may see at Bologna.

A terrific ringing of the door-bell put an end to these visions. The first-floor lodgers sent up the servant with a message. Would Schmucke please to stop the racket overhead. Madame, Monsieur and Mademoiselle Chapoulot had

been wakened, and could not sleep for the noise; they called his attention to the fact that the day was quite long enough for rehearsals of theatrical music, and added that people ought not to "strum" all night in a house in the Marais.—It was then three o'clock in the morning. At half-past three, La Cibot appeared, just as Pons had predicted. He might have actually heard the conference between Fraasier and the portress; "Did I not guess exactly how it would be?" his eyes seemed to say as he glanced at Schmucke, and, turning a little, he seemed to be fast asleep.

Schmucke's guileless simplicity was an article of belief with La Cibot (and be it noted that this faith in simplicity is the great source and secret of the success of all infantine strategy); La Cibot, therefore, could not suspect Schmucke of deceit when he came to say to her, with a face half of distress, half of glad relief:

"I haf had a derrible night! a derrible dime of it! I vas opliged to blay to keep him kviet, and the virst-floor lodgers vas komm up to tell *me* to be kviet! . . . It was frightful, for der life of mein friend vas at shtake. I am so tired mit der blaying all night dat dis morning I am all knocked up."

"My poor Cibot is very bad, too; one more day like yesterday, and he will have no strength left. . . . One can't help it; it is God's will."

"You haf a heart so honest, a soul so peautiful, dot gif der Zipod die, ve shall lif togedder," said the cunning Schmucke.

The craft of simple, straightforward folk is formidable indeed; they are exactly like children, setting their unsuspected snares with the perfect craft of the savage.

"Oh, well, go and sleep, sonny!" returned La Cibot. "Your eyes look tired, they are as big as my fist. But there! if anything could comfort me for losing Cibot, it would be the thought of ending my days with a good man like you. Be easy. I will give Mme. Chapoulot a dressing down. . . . To think of a retired haberdasher's wife giving herself such airs!"

Schmucke went to his room and took up his post in the closet.

La Cibot had left the door ajar on the landing; Fraasier came in and closed it noiselessly as soon as he heard Schmucke shut his bedroom door. He had brought with him a lighted taper and a bit of very fine wire to open the seal of the will. La Cibot, meanwhile, looking under the pillow, found the handkerchief with the key of the bureau knotted to one corner; and this so much the more easily because Pons purposely left the end hanging out over the bolster, and lay with his face to the wall.

La Cibot went straight to the bureau, opened it cautiously so as to make as little noise as possible, found the spring of the secret drawer, and hurried into the salon with the will in her hand. Her flight roused Pons's curiosity to the highest pitch; and as for Schmucke, he trembled as if he were the guilty person.

"Go back," said Fraasier, when she handed over the will. "He may wake, and he must find you there."

Fraasier opened the seal with a dexterity which proved that his was no 'prentice hand, and read the following curious document, headed "My Will," with ever-deepening astonishment:

"On this fifteenth day of April, eighteen hundred and forty-five, I, being in my sound mind (as this my Will, drawn up in concert with M. Trognon, will testify), and feeling that I must shortly die of the malady from which I have suffered since the beginning of February last, am anxious to dispose of my property, and have herein recorded my last wishes:

"I have always been impressed by the untoward circumstances that injure great pictures, and not infrequently bring about total destruction. I have felt sorry for the beautiful paintings condemned to travel from land to land, never finding some fixed abode whither admirers of great masterpieces

may travel to see them. And I have always thought that the truly deathless work of a great master ought to be national property; put where every one of every nation may see it, even as the Light, God's masterpiece, shines for all His children.

"And as I have spent my life in collecting together and choosing a few pictures, some of the greatest masters' most glorious work, and as these pictures are as the master left them—genuine examples, neither repainted nor retouched—it has been a painful thought to me that the paintings which have been the joy of my life, may be sold by public auction, and go, some to England, some to Russia, till they are all scattered abroad again as if they had never been gathered together. From this wretched fate I have determined to save both them and the frames in which they are set, all of them the work of skilled craftsmen.

"On these grounds, therefore, I give and bequeath the pictures which compose my collection to the King, for the gallery in the Louvre, subject to the charge (if the legacy is accepted) of a life-annuity of two thousand four hundred francs to my friend Wilhelm Schmucke.

"If the King, as usufructuary of the Louvre collection, should refuse the legacy with the charge upon it, the said pictures shall form a part of the estate which I leave to my friend Schmucke, on condition that he shall deliver the 'Monkey's Head,' by Goya, to my cousin, President Camusot; a 'Flower-piece,' the tulips, by Abraham Mignon, to M. Trognon, notary (whom I appoint as my executor); and allow Mme. Cibot, who has acted as my house-keeper for ten years, the sum of two hundred francs per annum.

"Finally, my friend Schmucke is to give the 'Descent from the Cross,' Rubens' sketch for his great picture at Antwerp, to adorn a chapel in the parish church, in grateful acknowledgment of M. Duplanty's kindness to me; for to him I owe it that I can die as a Christian and a Catholic."—So ran the will.

"This is ruin!" mused Fraasier, "the ruin of all my hopes. Ha! I begin to believe all that the *Présidente* told me about this old artist and his cunning."

"Well?" La Cibot came back to say.

"Your gentleman is a monster. He is leaving everything to the Crown. Now, you cannot plead against the Crown. . . . The will cannot be disputed. . . . We are robbed, ruined, spoiled, and murdered!"

"What has he left to me?"

"Two hundred francs a year."

"A pretty come-down! . . . Why, he is a finished scoundrel!"

"Go and see," said Fraasier, "and I will put your scoundrel's will back again in the envelope."

While Mme. Cibot's back was turned, Fraasier nimbly slipped a sheet of blank paper into the envelope; the will he put in his pocket. He next proceeded to seal the envelope again so cleverly that he showed the seal to Mme. Cibot when she returned, and asked her if she could see the slightest trace of the operation. La Cibot took up the envelope, felt it over, assured herself that it was not empty, and heaved a deep sigh. She had entertained hopes that Fraasier himself would have burned the unlucky document while she was out of the room.

"Well, my dear M. Fraasier, what is to be done?"

"Oh! that is your affair! I am not one of the next-of-kin, myself; but if I had the slightest claim to any of *that*" (indicating the collection), "I know very well what I should do."

"That is just what I want to know," La Cibot answered, with sufficient simplicity.

"There is a fire in the grate—" he said. Then he rose to go.

"After all, no one will know about it but you and me—" began La Cibot.

"It can never be proved that a will existed," asserted the man of law.

"And you?"

"I? . . . If M. Pons dies intestate, you shall have a hundred thousand francs."

"Oh, yes, no doubt," returned she. "People promise you heaps of money, and when they come by their own, and there is talk of paying, they swindle you like—"

"Like Elie Magus," she was going to say, but she stopped herself just in time.

"I am going," said Fraasier; "it is not to your interest that I should be found here; but I shall see you again downstairs."

La Cibot shut the door and returned with the sealed packet in her hand. She had quite made up her mind to burn it; but as she went toward the bedroom fireplace, she felt the grasp of a hand on each arm, and saw—Schmucke on one hand, and Pons himself on the other, leaning against the partition wall on either side of the door.

La Cibot cried out, and fell face downward in a fit; real or feigned, no one ever knew the truth. This sight produced such an impression on Pons that a deadly faintness came upon him, and Schmucke left the woman on the floor to help Pons back to bed. The friends trembled in every limb; they had set themselves a hard task, it was done, but it had been too much for their strength. When Pons lay in bed again, and Schmucke had regained strength to some extent, he heard a sound of sobbing. La Cibot, on her knees, bursting into tears, held out supplicating hands to them in very expressive pantomime.

"It was pure curiosity!" she sobbed, when she saw that Pons and Schmucke were paying any attention to her proceedings. "Pure curiosity; a woman's fault, you know. But I did not know how else to get a sight of your will, and I brought it back again—"

"Go!" said Schmucke, standing erect, his tall figure gaining in height by the full height of his indignation. "You are a monster! You dined to kill mein goot Bons! He is right. You are worse than a monster, you are a lost soul!"

La Cibot saw the look of abhorrence in the frank Ger-

man's face; she rose, proud as Tartuffe, gave Schmucke a glance which made him quake, and went out, carrying off under her dress an exquisite little picture of Metzu's pointed out by Elie Magus. "A diamond," he had called it. Fraasier downstairs in the porter's lodge was waiting to hear that La Cibot had burned the envelope and the sheet of blank paper inside it. Great was his astonishment when he beheld his fair client's agitation and dismay.

"What has happened?"

"*This* has happened, my dear M. Fraasier. Under pretence of giving me good advice and telling me what to do, you have lost me my annuity and the gentlemen's confidence. . . ."

One of the word-tornadoes in which she excelled was in full progress, but Fraasier cut her short.

"This is idle talk. The facts, the facts! and be quick about it."

"Well; it came about in this way"—and she told him of the scene which she had just come through.

"You have lost nothing through me," was Fraasier's comment. "The gentlemen had their doubts, or they would not have set this trap for you. They were lying in wait and spying upon you. . . . You have not told me everything," he added, with a tiger's glance at the woman before him.

"I hide anything from you!" cried she—"after all that we have done together!" she added with a shudder.

"My dear madame, *I* have done nothing blameworthy," returned Fraasier. Evidently he meant to deny his nocturnal visit to Pons's rooms.

Every hair on La Cibot's head seemed to scorch her, while a sense of icy cold swept over her from head to foot.

"*What?*" . . . she faltered in bewilderment.

"Here is a criminal charge on the face of it. . . . You may be accused of suppressing the will," Fraasier made answer dryly.

La Cibot started.

"Don't be alarmed; I am your legal adviser. I only

wished to show you how easy it is, in one way or another, to do as I once explained to you. Let us see, now; what have you done that this simple German should be hiding in the room?"

"Nothing at all, unless it was that scene the other day when I stood M. Pons out that his eyes dazzled. And ever since, the two gentlemen have been as different as can be. So you have brought all my troubles upon me; I might have lost my influence with M. Pons, but I was sure of the German; just now he was talking of marrying me or of taking me with him—it is all one."

The excuse was so plausible that Fraasier was fain to be satisfied with it. "You need fear nothing," he resumed. "I gave you my word that you shall have your money, and I shall keep my word. The whole matter, so far, was up in the air, but now it is as good as banknotes. . . . You shall have at least twelve hundred francs per annum. . . . But, my good lady, you must act intelligently under my orders."

"Yes, my dear M. Fraasier," said La Cibot with cringing servility. She was completely subdued.

"Very good. Good-by," and Fraasier went, taking the dangerous document with him. He reached home in great spirits. The will was a terrible weapon.

"Now," thought he, "I have a hold on Mme. la Présidente de Marville; she must keep her word with me. If she did not, she would lose the property."

At daybreak, when Rémonencq had taken down his shutters and left his sister in charge of the shop, he came, after his wont of late, to inquire for his good friend Cibot. The portress was contemplating the Metzu, privately wondering how a little bit of painted wood could be worth such a lot of money.

"Aha!" said he, looking over her shoulder, "that is the one picture which M. Elie Magus regretted; with that little bit of a thing, he says, his happiness would be complete."

"What would he give for it?" asked La Cibot.

"Why, if you will promise to marry me within a year of

widowhood, I will undertake to get twenty thousand francs for it from Elie Magus; and unless you marry me you will never get a thousand francs for the picture."

"Why not?"

"Because you would be obliged to give a receipt for the money, and then you might have a lawsuit with the heirs-at-law. If you were my wife, I myself should sell the thing to M. Magus, and in the way of business it is enough to make an entry in the day-book, and I should note that M. Schmucke sold it to me. There, leave the panel with me. . . . If your husband were to die you might have a lot of bother over it, but no one would think it odd that I should have a picture in the shop. . . . You know me quite well. Besides, I will give you a receipt if you like."

The covetous portress felt that she had been caught; she agreed to a proposal which was to bind her for the rest of her life to the marine-store dealer.

"You are right," said she, as she locked the picture away in a chest; "bring me the bit of writing."

Rémonencq beckoned her to the door.

"I can see, neighbor, that we shall not save our poor dear Cibot," he said, lowering his voice. "Dr. Poulain gave him up yesterday evening, and said that he could not last out the day. . . . It is a great misfortune. But, after all, this was not the place for you. . . . You ought to be in a fine curiosity shop on the Boulevard des Capucines. Do you know that I have made nearly a hundred thousand francs in ten years? and if you will have as much some day, I will undertake to make a handsome fortune for you—as my wife. You would be the mistress—my sister should wait on you and do the work of the house, and—"

A heartrending moan from the little tailor cut the tempter short; the death agony had begun.

"Go away," said La Cibot. "You are a monster to talk of such things and my poor man dying like this—"

"Ah! it is because I love you," said Rémonencq; "I could let everything else go to have you—"

"If you loved me, you would say nothing to me just now," returned she. And Rémonencq departed to his shop, sure of marrying La Cibot.

Toward ten o'clock there was a sort of commotion in the street; M. Cibot was taking the Sacrament. All the friends of the pair, all the porters and porters' wives in the Rue de Normandie and neighboring streets, had crowded into the lodge, under the archway, and stood on the pavement outside. Nobody so much as noticed the arrival of M. Léopold Hannequin and a brother lawyer. Schwab and Brunner reached Pons's rooms unseen by Mme. Cibot. The notary, inquiring for Pons, was shown upstairs by the portress of a neighboring house. Brunner remembered his previous visit to the museum, and went straight in with his friend Schwab.

Pons formally revoked his previous will and constituted Schmucke his universal legatee. This accomplished, he thanked Schwab and Brunner, and earnestly begged M. Léopold Hannequin to protect Schmucke's interests. The demands made upon him by last night's scene with La Cibot, and this final settlement of his worldly affairs, left him so faint and exhausted that Schmucke begged Schwab to go for the Abbé Duplanty; it was Pons's great desire to take the Sacrament, and Schmucke could not bring himself to leave his friend.

La Cibot, sitting at the foot of her husband's bed, gave not so much as a thought to Schmucke's breakfast—for that matter, had been forbidden to return; but the morning's events, the sight of Pons's heroic resignation in the death agony, so oppressed Schmucke's heart that he was not conscious of hunger. Toward two o'clock, however, as nothing had been seen of the old German, La Cibot sent Rémonencq's sister to see whether Schmucke wanted anything; prompted not so much by interest as by curiosity. The Abbé Duplanty had just heard the old musician's dying confession, and the administration of the sacrament of extreme unction was disturbed by repeated ringing of the door-bell. Pons,

in his terror of robbery, had made Schmucke promise solemnly to admit no one into the house; so Schmucke did not stir. Again and again Mlle. Rémonencq pulled the cord, and finally went downstairs in alarm to tell La Cibot that Schmucke would not open the door; Fraisier made a note of this. Schmucke had never seen any one die in his life; before long he would be perplexed by the many difficulties which beset those who are left with a dead body in Paris, this more especially if they are lonely and helpless and have no one to act for them. Fraisier knew, moreover, that in real affliction people lose their heads, and therefore immediately after breakfast he took up his position in the porter's lodge, and, sitting there in perpetual committee with Dr. Poulain, conceived the idea of directing all Schmucke's actions himself.

To obtain the important result, the doctor and the lawyer took their measures on this wise:

The beadle of Saint-François, Cantinet by name, at one time a retail dealer in glassware, lived in the Rue d'Orléans, next door to Dr. Poulain and under the same roof. Mme. Cantinet, who saw to the letting of the chairs at Saint-François, once had fallen ill and Dr. Poulain had attended her gratuitously; she was, as might be expected, grateful, and often confided her troubles to him. The "nutcrackers," punctual in their attendance at Saint-François on Sundays and saints' days, were on friendly terms with the beadle and the lowest ecclesiastical rank and file, commonly called in Paris *le bas clergé*, to whom the devout usually give little presents from time to time. Mme. Cantinet therefore knew Schmucke almost as well as Schmucke knew her. And Mme. Cantinet was afflicted with two sore troubles which enabled the lawyer to use her as a blind and involuntary agent. Cantinet junior, a stage-struck youth, had deserted the paths of the Church and turned his back on the prospect of one day becoming a beadle, to make his *début* among the supernumeraries of the Cirque-Olympique; he was leading a wild life, breaking his mother's heart and draining her

purse by frequent forced loans. Cantinet senior, much addicted to spirituous liquors and idleness, had, in fact, been driven to retire from business by those two failings. So far from reforming, the incorrigible offender had found scope in his new occupation for the indulgence of both cravings; he did nothing, and he drank with drivers of wedding-coaches, with the undertaker's men at funerals, with poor folk relieved by the vicar, till his morning's occupation was set forth in rubric on his countenance by noon.

Mme. Cantinet saw no prospect but want in her old age, and yet she had brought her husband twelve thousand francs, she said. The tale of her woes related for the hundredth time suggested an idea to Dr. Poulain. Once introduce her into the old bachelor's quarters, and it would be easy by her means to establish Mme. Sauvage there as working house-keeper. It was quite impossible to present Mme. Sauvage herself, for the "nutcrackers" had grown suspicious of every one. Schmucke's refusal to admit Mlle. Rémonencq had sufficiently opened Fraisiér's eyes. Still, it seemed evident that Pons and Schmucke, being pious souls, would take any one recommended by the Abbé, with blind confidence. Mme. Cantinet should bring Mme. Sauvage with her, and to put in Fraisiér's servant was almost tantamount to installing Fraisiér.

The Abbé Duplanty, coming downstairs, found the gateway blocked by the Cibots' friends, all of them bent upon showing their interest in one of the oldest and most respectable porters in the Marais.

Dr. Poulain raised his hat, and took the Abbé aside.

"I am just about to go to poor M. Pons," he said. "There is still a chance of recovery; but it is a question of inducing him to undergo an operation. The calculi are perceptible to the touch, they are setting up an inflammatory condition which will end fatally, but perhaps it is not too late to remove them. You should really use your influence to persuade the patient to submit to surgical treatment; I will answer for his life, provided that no untoward circumstance occurs during the operation."

"I will return as soon as I have taken the sacred ciborium back to the church," said the Abbé Duplanty, "for M. Schmucke's condition claims the support of religion."

"I have just heard that he is alone," said Dr. Poulain. "The German, good soul, had a little altercation this morning with Mme. Cibot, who has acted as housekeeper to them both for the past ten years. They have quarrelled (for the moment only, no doubt), but under the circumstances they must have some one in to help upstairs. It would be a charity to look after him.—I say, Cantinet," continued the doctor, beckoning to the beadle, "just go and ask your wife if she will nurse M. Pons, and look after M. Schmucke, and take Mme. Cibot's place for a day or two. . . . Even without the quarrel, Mme. Cibot would still require a substitute. Mme. Cantinet is honest," added the doctor, turning to M. Duplanty.

"You could not make a better choice," said the good priest; "she is intrusted with the letting of chairs in the church."

A few minutes later, Dr. Poulain stood by Pons's pillow watching the progress made by death, and Schmucke's vain efforts to persuade his friend to consent to the operation. To all the poor German's despairing entreaties Pons only replied by a shake of the head and occasional impatient movements; till, after a while, he summoned up all his fast-failing strength to say, with a heartrending look:

"Do let me die in peace!"

Schmucke almost died of sorrow, but he took Pons's hand, and softly kissed it, and held it between his own, as if trying a second time to give his own vitality to his friend.

Just at this moment the bell rang, and Dr. Poulain, going to the door, admitted the Abbé Duplanty.

"Our poor patient is struggling in the grasp of death," he said. "All will be over in a few hours. You will send a priest, no doubt, to watch to-night. But it is time that Mme. Cantinet came, as well as a woman to do the work, for M. Schmucke is quite unfit to think of anything: I am

afraid for his reason; and there are valuables here which ought to be in the custody of honest persons."

The Abbé Duplanty, a kindly, upright priest, guileless and unsuspecting, was struck with the truth of Dr. Poulain's remarks. He had, moreover, a certain belief in the doctor of the quarter. So on the threshold of the death-chamber he stopped and beckoned to Schmucke, but Schmucke could not bring himself to loosen the grasp of the hand that grew tighter and tighter. Pons seemed to think that he was slipping over the edge of a precipice and must catch at something to save himself. But, as many know, the dying are haunted by a hallucination that leads them to snatch at things about them, like men eager to save their most precious possessions from a fire. Presently Pons released Schmucke to clutch at the bedclothes, dragging them and huddling them about himself with a hasty, covetous movement significant and painful to see.

"What will you do, left alone with your dead friend?" asked M. l'Abbé Duplanty when Schmucke came to the door. "You have not Mme. Cibot now—"

"Ein monster dat haf killed Bons!"

"But you must have somebody with you," began Dr. Poulain. "Some one must sit up with the body to-night."

"I shall sit up; I shall say die prayers to Gott," the innocent German answered.

"But you must eat—and who is to cook for you now?" asked the doctor.

"Grief haf taken afay mein abbetite," Schmucke said, simply.

"And some one must give notice to the registrar," said Poulain, "and lay out the body, and order the funeral; and the person who sits up with the body and the priest will want meals. Can you do this all by yourself? A man cannot die like a dog in the capital of the civilized world."

Schmucke opened wide eyes of dismay. A brief fit of madness seized him.

"But Bons shall not tie! . . ." he cried aloud. "I shall save him!"

"You cannot go without sleep much longer, and who will take your place? Some one must look after M. Pons, and give him drink, and nurse him—"

"Ah! dat is drue."

"Very well," said the Abbé, "I am thinking of sending you Mme. Cantinet, a good and honest creature—"

The practical details of the care of the dead bewildered Schmucke, till he was fain to die with his friend.

"He is a child," said the doctor, turning to the Abbé Duplanty.

"Ein child," Schmucke repeated mechanically.

"There, then," said the curate; "I will speak to Mme. Cantinet, and send her to you."

"Do not trouble yourself," said the doctor; "I am going home, and she lives in the next house."

The dying seem to struggle with Death as with an invisible assassin; in the agony at the last, as the final thrust is made, the act of dying seems to be a conflict, a hand-to-hand fight for life. Pons had reached the supreme moment. At the sound of his groans and cries, the three standing in the doorway hurried to the bedside. Then came the last blow, smiting asunder the bonds between soul and body, striking down to life's sources; and suddenly Pons regained for a few brief moments the perfect calm that follows the struggle. He came to himself, and with the serenity of death in his face he looked round almost smilingly at them.

"Ah, doctor, I have had a hard time of it; but you were right, I am doing better. Thank you, my good Abbé; I was wondering what had become of Schmucke—"

"Schmucke has had nothing to eat since yesterday evening, and now it is four o'clock! You have no one with you now, and it would not be wise to send for Mme. Cibot."

"She is capable of anything!" said Pons, without attempting to conceal all his abhorrence at the sound of her name. "It is true, Schmucke ought to have some trustworthy person."

"M. Duplanty and I have been thinking about you both—"

"Ah! thank you, I had not thought of that."

"—and M. Duplanty suggests that you should have Mme. Cantinet—"

"Oh! Mme. Cantinet who lets the chairs!" exclaimed Pons. "Yes; she is an excellent creature."

"She has no liking for Mme. Cibot," continued the doctor, "and she would take good care of M. Schmucke—"

"Send her to me, M. Duplanty . . . send her and her husband too. I shall be easy. Nothing will be stolen here."

Schmucke had taken Pons's hand again, and held it joyously in his own. Pons was almost well again, he thought.

"Let us go, Monsieur l'Abbé," said the doctor. "I will send Mme. Cantinet round at once. I see how it is. She perhaps may not find M. Pons alive."

While the Abbé Duplanty was persuading Pons to engage Mme. Cantinet as his nurse, Fraasier had sent for her. He had plied the beadle's wife with sophistical reasoning and subtlety. It was difficult to resist his corrupting influence. As for Mme. Cantinet—a lean, sallow woman, with large teeth and thin lips—her intelligence, as so often happens with women of the people, had been blunted by a hard life, till she had come to look upon the slenderest daily wage as prosperity. She soon consented to take Mme. Sauvage with her as general servant.

Mme. Sauvage had had her instructions already. She had undertaken to weave a web of iron wire about the two musicians, and to watch them as a spider watches a fly caught in the toils; and her reward was to be a tobacconist's license. Fraasier had found a convenient opportunity of getting rid of his so-called foster-mother, while he posted her as a detective and policeman to supervise Mme. Cantinet. As there was a servant's bedroom and a little kitchen included in the apartment, La Sauvage could sleep on a truckle-bed and cook for the German. Dr. Poulain came

with the two women just as Pons drew his last breath. Schmucke was sitting beside his friend, all unconscious of the crisis, holding the hand that slowly grew colder in his grasp. He signed to Mme. Cantinet to be silent; but Mme. Sauvage's soldierly figure surprised him so much that he started in spite of himself; a kind of homage to which the virago was quite accustomed.

"M. Duplanty answers for this lady," whispered Mme. Cantinet by way of introduction. "She once was cook to a bishop; she is honesty itself; she will do the cooking."

"Oh! you may talk out loud," wheezed the stalwart dame. "The poor gentleman is dead. . . . He has just gone."

A shrill cry broke from Schmucke. He felt Pons's cold hand stiffening in his, and sat staring into his friend's eyes; the look in them would have driven him mad, if Mme. Sauvage, doubtless accustomed to scenes of this sort, had not come to the bedside with a mirror which she held over the lips of the dead. When she saw that there was no mist upon the surface, she briskly snatched Schmucke's hand away.

"Just take away your hand, sir; you may not be able to do it in a little while. You do not know how the bones harden. A corpse grows cold very quickly. If you do not lay out a body while it is warm, you have to break the joints later on. . . ."

And so it was this terrible woman who closed the poor dead musician's eyes.

With a businesslike dexterity acquired in ten years of experience, she stripped and straightened the body, laid the arms by the sides, and covered the face with the bedclothes, exactly as a shopman wraps a parcel.

"A sheet will be wanted to lay him out.—Where is there a sheet?" she demanded, turning on the terror-stricken Schmucke.

He had watched the religious ritual with its deep reverence for the creature made for such high destinies in heaven; and now he saw his dead friend treated simply as a thing in

this packing process—saw with the sharp pain that dissolves the very elements of thought.

"Do as you vill—" he answered mechanically. The innocent creature for the first time in his life had seen a man die, and that man was Pons, his only friend, the one human being who understood him and loved him.

"I will go and ask Mme. Cibot where the sheets are kept," said La Sauvage.

"A truckle-bed will be wanted for the person to sleep upon," Mme. Cantinet came to tell Schmucke.

Schmucke nodded and broke out into weeping. Mme. Cantinet left the unhappy man in peace; but an hour later she came back to say:

"Have you any money, sir, to pay for the things?"

The look that Schmucke gave Mme. Cantinet would have disarmed the fiercest hate; it was the white, blank, peaked face of death that he turned upon her, as an explanation that met everything.

"Dake it all and leaf me to mein prayers and tears," he said, and knelt.

Mme. Sauvage went to Fraasier with the news of Pons's death. Fraasier took a cab and went to the Présidente. To-morrow she must give him the power of attorney to enable him to act for the heirs.

Another hour went by, and Mme. Cantinet came again to Schmucke.

"I have been to Mme. Cibot, sir, who knows all about things here," she said. "I asked her to tell me where everything is kept. But she almost jawed me to death with her abuse. . . . Sir, do listen to me. . . ."

Schmucke looked up at the woman, and she went on, innocent of any barbarous intention, for women of her class are accustomed to take the worst of moral suffering passively, as a matter of course.

"We must have linen for the shroud, sir, we must have money to buy a truckle-bed for the person to sleep upon, and some things for the kitchen—plates, and dishes, and glasses,

for a priest will be coming to pass the night here, and the person says that there is absolutely nothing in the kitchen."

"And what is more, sir, I must have coal and firing if I am to get the dinner ready," echoed La Sauvage, "and not a thing can I find. Not that there is anything so very surprising in that, as La Cibot used to do everything for you—"

Schmucke lay at the feet of the dead; he heard nothing, knew nothing, saw nothing. Mme. Cantinet pointed to him. "My dear woman, you would not believe me," she said. "Whatever you say, he does not answer."

"Very well, child," said La Sauvage; "now I will show you what to do in a case of this kind."

She looked round the room as a thief looks in search of possible hiding-places for money; then she went straight to Pons's chest, opened the first drawer, saw the bag in which Schmucke had put the rest of the money after the sale of the pictures, and held it up before him. He nodded mechanically.

"Here is money, child," said La Sauvage, turning to Mme. Cantinet. "I will count it first and take enough to buy everything we want—wine, provisions, wax-candles, all sorts of things, in fact, for there is nothing in the house. . . . Just look in the drawers for a sheet to bury him in. I certainly was told that the poor gentleman was simple, but I don't know what he is; he is worse. He is like a new-born child; we shall have to feed him with a funnel."

The women went about their work, and Schmucke looked on precisely as an idiot might have done. Broken down with sorrow, wholly absorbed, in a half-cataleptic state, he could not take his eyes from the face that seemed to fascinate him, Pons's face refined by the absolute repose of Death. Schmucke hoped to die; everything was alike indifferent. If the room had been on fire he would not have stirred.

"There are twelve hundred and fifty francs here," La Sauvage told him.

Schmucke shrugged his shoulders.

But when La Sauvage came near to measure the body by laying the sheet over it, before cutting out the shroud, a horrible struggle ensued between her and the poor German. Schmucke was furious. He behaved like a dog that watches by his dead master's body, and shows his teeth at all who try to touch it. La Sauvage grew impatient. She grasped him, set him in the armchair, and held him down with herculean strength.

"Go on, child; sew him in his shroud," she said, turning to Mme. Cantinet.

As soon as this operation was completed, La Sauvage set Schmucke back in his place at the foot of the bed.

"Do you understand?" said she. "The poor dead man lying there must be done up, there is no help for it."

Schmucke began to cry. The women left him and took possession of the kitchen, whither they brought all the necessities in a very short time. La Sauvage made out a preliminary statement accounting for three hundred and sixty francs, and then proceeded to prepare a dinner for four persons. And what a dinner! A fat goose (the cobbler's pheasant) by way of a substantial roast, an omelet with preserves, a salad, and the inevitable broth—the quantities of the ingredients for this last being so excessive that the soup was more like a strong meat-jelly.

At nine o'clock the priest, sent by the curate to watch by the dead, came in with Cantinet, who brought four tall wax candles and some tapers. In the death-chamber Schmucke was lying with his arms about the body of his friend, holding him in a tight clasp; nothing but the authority of religion availed to separate him from his dead. Then the priest settled himself comfortably in the easy-chair and read his prayers; while Schmucke, kneeling beside the couch, besought God to work a miracle and unite him to Pons, so that they might be buried in the same grave; and Mme. Cantinet went on her way to the Temple to buy a pallet and complete bedding for Mme. Sauvage. The twelve hundred and fifty francs

were regarded as plunder. At eleven o'clock Mme. Cantinet came in to ask if Schmucke would not eat a morsel, but with a gesture he signified that he wished to be left in peace.

"Your supper is ready, M. Pastelot," she said, addressing the priest, and they went.

Schmucke, left alone in the room, smiled to himself like a madman free at last to gratify a desire like the longing of pregnancy. He flung himself down beside Pons, and yet again he held his friend in a long, close embrace. At midnight the priest came back and scolded him, and Schmucke returned to his prayers. At daybreak the priest went, and at seven o'clock in the morning the doctor came to see Schmucke, and spoke kindly and tried hard to persuade him to eat, but the German refused.

"If you do not eat now you will feel very hungry when you come back," the doctor told him, "for you must go to the mayor's office and take a witness with you, so that the registrar may issue a certificate of death."

"I must go!" cried Schmucke in frightened tones.

"Who else? . . . You must go, for you were the one person who saw him die."

"Mein legs vill nicht carry me," pleaded Schmucke, imploring the doctor to come to the rescue.

"Take a cab," the hypocritical doctor blandly suggested. "I have given notice already. Ask some one in the house to go with you. The two women will look after the place while you are away."

No one imagines how the requirements of the law jar upon a heartfelt sorrow. The thought of it is enough to make one turn from civilization and choose rather the customs of the savage. At nine o'clock that morning Mme. Sauvage half-carried Schmucke downstairs, and from the cab he was obliged to beg Rémonencq to come with him to the registrar as a second witness. Here in Paris, in this land of ours besotted with Equality, the inequality of conditions is glaringly apparent everywhere and in everything.

The immutable tendency of things peeps out even in the practical aspects of death. In well-to-do families, a relative, a friend, or a man of business spares the mourners these painful details; but in this, as in the matter of taxation, the whole burden falls heaviest upon the shoulders of the poor.

"Ah! you have good reason to regret him," said Rémonencq in answer to the poor martyr's moan; "he was a very good, a very honest man, and he has left a fine collection behind him. But being a foreigner, sir, do you know that you are like to find yourself in a great predicament—for everybody says that M. Pons left everything to you?"

Schmucke was not listening. He was sounding the dark depths of sorrow that border upon madness. There is such a thing as tetanus of the soul.

"And you would do well to find some one—some man of business—to advise you and act for you," pursued Rémonencq.

"Ein mann of pizness!" echoed Schmucke.

"You will find that you will want some one to act for you. If I were you, I should take an experienced man, somebody well known in the quarter, a man you can trust. . . . I always go to Tabareau myself for my bits of affairs—he is the bailiff. If you give his clerk power to act for you, you need not trouble yourself any further."

Rémonencq and La Cibot, prompted by Fraisier, had agreed beforehand to make a suggestion which stuck in Schmucke's memory; for there are times in our lives when grief, as it were, congeals the mind by arresting all its functions, and any chance impression made at such moments is retained by a frost-bound memory. Schmucke heard his companion with such a fixed, mindless stare that Rémonencq said no more.

"If he is always to be idiotic like this," thought Rémonencq, "I might easily buy the whole bag of tricks up yonder for a hundred thousand francs; if it is really his. . . . Here we are at the mayor's office, sir."

Rémonencq was obliged to take Schmucke out of the cab and to half-carry him to the registrar's department, where a wedding-party was assembled. Here they had to wait for their turn, for, by no very uncommon chance, the clerk had five or six certificates to make out that morning; and here it was appointed that poor Schmucke should suffer excruciating anguish.

"Monsieur is M. Schmucke?" remarked a person in a suit of black, reducing Schmucke to stupefaction by the mention of his name. He looked up with the same blank, unseeing eyes that he had turned upon Rémonencq, who now interposed.

"What do you want with him?" he said. "Just leave him in peace; you can see plainly that he is in trouble."

"The gentleman has just lost his friend, and proposes, no doubt, to do honor to his memory, being, as he is, the sole heir. The gentleman, no doubt, will not haggle over it; he will buy a piece of ground outright for a grave. And as M. Pons was such a lover of the arts, it would be a great pity not to put Music, Painting, and Sculpture on his tomb—three handsome full-length figures, weeping—"

Rémonencq waved the speaker away, in Auvergnat fashion, but the man replied with another gesture, which being interpreted means "Don't spoil sport"; a piece of commercial freemasonry, as it were, which the dealer understood.

"I represent the firm of Sonet and Company, monumental stone-masons; Sir Walter Scott would have dubbed me *Young Mortality*," continued this person. "If you, sir, should decide to intrust your orders to us, we would spare you the trouble of the journey to purchase the ground necessary for the interment of a friend lost to the arts—"

At this Rémonencq nodded assent, and jogged Schmucke's elbow.

"Every day we receive orders from families to arrange all formalities," continued he of the black coat, thus encouraged by Rémonencq. "In the first moment of bereavement, the heir-at-law finds it very difficult to attend to such mat-

ters, and we are accustomed to perform these little services for our clients. Our charges, sir, are on a fixed scale, so much per foot, freestone or marble. Family vaults a specialty.—We undertake everything at the most moderate prices. Our firm executed the magnificent monument erected to the fair Esther Gobseck and Lucien de Rubempré, one of the finest ornaments of Père-Lachaise. We only employ the best workmen, and I must warn you, sir, against small contractors—who turn out nothing but trash," he added, seeing that another person in a black suit was coming up to say a word for another firm of marble-workers.

It is often said that "death is the end of a journey," but the aptness of the simile is realized most fully in Paris. Any arrival, especially of a person of condition, upon the "dark brink," is hailed in much the same way as the traveller recently landed is hailed by hotel touts and pestered with their recommendations. With the exception of a few philosophically-minded persons, or here and there a family secure of handing down a name to posterity, nobody thinks beforehand of the practical aspects of death. Death always comes before he is expected; and, from a sentiment easy to understand, the heirs usually act as if the event were impossible. For which reason, almost every one that loses father or mother, wife or child, is immediately beset by scouts that profit by the confusion caused by grief to snare orders. In former days, agents for monuments used to live round about the famous cemetery of Père-Lachaise, and were gathered together in a single thoroughfare which should by rights have been called the Street of Tombs; issuing thence, they fell upon the relatives of the dead as they came from the cemetery, or even at the grave-side. But the competition and the spirit of speculation induced them to spread themselves further and further afield, till descending into Paris itself they reached the very precincts of the mayor's office. Indeed, the stone-mason's agent has often been known to invade the house of mourning with a design for the sepulchre in his hand.

"I am in treaty with this gentleman," said the representative of the firm of Sonet to another agent who came up.

"Pons deceased! . . ." called the clerk at this moment. "Where are the witnesses?"

"This way, sir," said the stone-mason's agent, this time addressing Rémonencq.

Schmucke stayed where he had been placed on the bench, an inert mass. Rémonencq begged the agent to help him, and together they pulled Schmucke toward the balustrade, behind which the registrar shelters himself from the mourning public. Rémonencq, Schmucke's Providence, was assisted by Dr. Poulain, who filled in the necessary information as to Pons's age and birthplace; the German knew but one thing—that Pons was his friend. So soon as the signatures were affixed, Rémonencq and the doctor (followed by the stone-mason's man), put Schmucke into a cab, the desperate agent whisking in afterward, bent upon taking a definite order.

La Sauvage, on the lookout in the gateway, half-carried Schmucke's almost unconscious form upstairs. Rémonencq and the agent went up with her.

"He will be ill!" exclaimed the agent, anxious to make an end of the piece of business which, according to him, was in progress.

"I should think he will!" returned Mme. Sauvage. "He has been crying for twenty-four hours on end, and he would not take anything. There is nothing like grief for giving one a sinking in the stomach."

"My dear client," urged the representative of the firm of Sonet, "do take some broth. You have so much to do; some one must go to the Hôtel de Ville to buy the ground in the cemetery on which you mean to erect a monument to perpetuate the memory of the friend of the arts, and bear record to your gratitude."

"Why, there is no sense in this!" added Mme. Cantinet, coming in with broth and bread.

"If you are as weak as this, you ought to think of finding

some one to act for you," added Rémonencq, "for you have a good deal on your hands, my dear sir. There is the funeral to order. You would not have your friend buried like a pauper!"

"Come, come, my dear sir," put in La Sauvage, seizing a moment when Schmucke laid his head back in the great chair to pour a spoonful of soup into his mouth. She fed him as if he had been a child, and almost in spite of himself.

"Now, if you were wise, sir, since you are inclined to give yourself up quietly to grief, you would find some one to act for you—"

"As you are thinking of raising a magnificent monument to the memory of your friend, sir, you have only to leave it all to me; I will undertake—"

"What is all this? What is all this?" asked La Sauvage. "Has M. Schmucke ordered something? Who may you be?"

"I represent the firm of Sonet, my dear madame, the biggest monumental stone-mason in Paris," said the person in black, handing a business-card to the stalwart Sauvage.

"Very well, that will do. Some one will go to you when the time comes; but you must not take advantage of the gentleman's condition now. You can quite see that he is not himself—"

The agent led her out upon the landing.

"If you will undertake to get the order for us," he said confidentially, "I am empowered to offer you forty francs."

Mme. Sauvage grew placable. "Very well, let me have your address," said she.

Schmucke meantime being left to himself, and feeling the stronger for the soup and bread that he had been forced to swallow, returned at once to Pons's room, and to his prayers. He had lost himself in the fathomless depths of sorrow, when a voice sounding in his ears drew him back from the abyss of grief, and a young man in a suit of black returned for the eleventh time to the charge, pulling the poor, tortured victim's coat-sleeve until he listened.

"Sir!" said he.

"Vat ees it now?"

"Sir! we owe a supreme discovery to Dr. Gannal: we do not dispute his fame, he has worked the miracles of Egypt afresh; but there have been improvements made upon his system. We have obtained surprising results. So, if you would like to see your friend again, as he was when he was alive—"

"See him again!" cried Schmucke. "Shall he speak to me?"

"Not exactly. Speech is the only thing wanting," continued the embalmer's agent. "But he will remain as he is after embalming for all eternity. The operation is over in a few seconds. Just an incision in the carotid artery and an injection.—But it is high time; if you wait one single quarter of an hour, sir, you will not have the sweet satisfaction of preserving the body. . . ."

"Go to der teuffel! . . . Bons is ein spirit—und dat spirit is in hefn."

"That man has no gratitude in his composition," remarked the youthful agent of one of the famous Gannal's rivals; "he will not embalm his friend."

The words were spoken under the archway, and addressed to La Cibot, who had just submitted her beloved to the process.

"What would you have, sir!" she said. "He is the heir, the universal legatee. As soon as they get what they want, the dead are nothing to them."

An hour later, Schmucke saw Mme. Sauvage come into the room, followed by another man in a suit of black, a workman to all appearance.

"Cantinet has been so obliging as to send this gentleman, sir," she said; "he is coffin-maker to the parish."

The coffin-maker made his bow with a sympathetic and compassionate air, but none the less he had a business-like look, and seemed to know that he was indispensable. He turned an expert's eye upon the dead.

"How does the gentleman wish 'it' to be made? Deal,

plain oak, or oak lead-lined? Oak with a lead lining is the best style. The body is a stock size"—he felt for the feet and proceeded to take the measure—"one metre seventy!" he added. "You will be thinking of ordering the funeral service at the church, sir, no doubt?"

Schmucke looked at him as a dangerous madman might look before striking a blow. La Sauvage put in a word.

"You ought to find somebody to look after all these things," she said.

"Yes—" the victim murmured at length.

"Shall I fetch M. Tabareau?—for you will have a good deal on your hands before long. M. Tabareau is the most honest man in the quarter, you see."

"Yes. Mennesir Dapareau! Somepody vas speaking of him chust now—" said Schmucke, completely beaten.

"Very well. You can be quiet, sir, and give yourself up to grief, when you have seen your deputy."

It was nearly two o'clock when M. Tabareau's head-clerk, a young man who aimed at a bailiff's career, modestly presented himself. Youth has wonderful privileges; no one is alarmed by youth. This young man, Villemot by name, sat down by Schmucke's side and waited his opportunity to speak. His diffidence touched Schmucke very much.

"I am M. Tabareau's head-clerk, sir," he said; "he sent me here to take charge of your interests, and to superintend the funeral arrangements. Is this your wish?"

"You cannot safe my life, I haf not long to lif; but you will leaf me in beace!"

"Oh! you shall not be disturbed," said Villemot.

"Ver' goot. Vat must I do for dat?"

"Sign this paper appointing M. Tabareau to act for you in all matters relating to the settlement of the affairs of the deceased."

"Goot! gif it to me," said Schmucke, anxious only to sign it at once.

"No, I must read it over to you first."

"Read it ofer."

Schmucke paid not the slightest attention to the reading of the power of attorney, but he set his name to it. The young clerk took Schmucke's orders for the funeral, the interment, and the burial service; undertaking that he should not be troubled again in any way, nor asked for money.

"I would gif all dat I haf to pe left in beace," said the unhappy man. And once more he knelt beside the dead body of his friend.

Fraisier had triumphed. Villemot and La Sauvage completed the circle which he had traced about Pons's heir.

There is no sorrow that sleep cannot overcome. Toward the end of the day La Sauvage, coming in, found Schmucke stretched asleep at the bed-foot. She carried him off, put him to bed, tucked him in maternally, and till the morning Schmucke slept.

When he awoke, or rather when the truce was over and he again became conscious of his sorrows, Pons's coffin lay under the gateway in such a state as a third-class funeral may claim, and Schmucke, seeking vainly for his friend, wandered from room to room, across vast spaces, as it seemed to him, empty of everything save hideous memories. La Sauvage took him in hand, much as a nurse manages a child; she made him take his breakfast before starting for the church; and while the poor sufferer forced himself to eat, she discovered, with lamentations worthy of Jeremiah, that he had not a black coat in his possession. La Cibot took entire charge of his wardrobe; since Pons fell ill his apparel, like his dinner, had been reduced to the lowest terms—to a couple of coats and two pairs of trousers.

"And you are going just as you are to M. Pons's funeral? It is an unheard-of thing; the whole quarter will cry shame upon us!"

"Und how vill you dat I go?"

"Why, in mourning—"

"Mourning!"

"It is the proper thing."

"Der bropper ding! . . . confound all dis stupid non-

sense!" cried poor Schmucke, driven to the last degree of exasperation which a childlike soul can reach under stress of sorrow.

"Why, the man is a monster of ingratitude!" said La Sauvage, turning to a personage who just then appeared. At the sight of this functionary Schmucke shuddered. The new-comer wore a splendid suit of black, black knee-breeches, black silk stockings, a pair of white cuffs, an extremely correct white muslin tie, and white gloves. A silver chain with a coin attached ornamented his person. A typical official, stamped with the official expression of decorous gloom, an ebony wand in his hand by way of insignia of office, he stood waiting with a three-cornered hat adorned with the tricolor cockade under his arm.

"I am the master of the ceremonies," this person remarked in a subdued voice.

Accustomed daily to superintend funerals, to move among families plunged in one and the same kind of tribulation, real or feigned, this man, like the rest of his fraternity, spoke in hushed and soothing tones; he was decorous, polished, and formal, like an allegorical stone figure of Death.

Schmucke quivered through every nerve as if he were confronting his executioner.

"Is this gentleman the son, brother, or father of the deceased?" inquired the official.

"I am all dat und more pesides—I am his friend," said Schmucke through a torrent of weeping.

"Are you his heir?"

"Heir? . . ." repeated Schmucke. "Noding matters to me more in dis vorld," returning to his attitude of hopeless sorrow.

"Where are the relatives, the friends?" asked the master of the ceremonies.

"All here!" exclaimed the German, indicating the pictures and rarities. "Not von of dem haf efer gifn bain to mein boor Bons. . . . Here ees everydings dot he lofed, after me."

"He is off his head, sir," put in La Sauvage. "It is useless to listen to him."

Schmucke had taken his seat again, and looked as vacant as before; he dried his eyes mechanically. Villemot came up at that moment; he had ordered the funeral, and the master of the ceremonies, recognizing him, made an appeal to the new-comer.

"Well, sir, it is time to start. The hearse is here; but I have not often seen such a funeral as this. Where are the relatives and friends?"

"We have been pressed for time," replied Villemot. "This gentleman was in such deep grief that he could think of nothing. And there is only one relative."

The master of the ceremonies looked compassionately at Schmucke; this expert in sorrow knew real grief when he saw it. He went across to him.

"Come, take heart, my dear sir. Think of paying honor to your friend's memory."

"We forgot to send out cards; but I took care to send a special message to M. le Président de Marville, the one relative that I mentioned to you.—There are no friends.—M. Pons was conductor of an orchestra at a theatre, but I do not think that any one will come.—This gentleman is the universal legatee, I believe."

"Then he ought to be chief mourner," said the master of the ceremonies.—"Have you not a black coat?" he continued, noticing Schmucke's costume.

"I am all in plack insite!" poor Schmucke replied in heartrending tones; "so plack it is dot I feel death in me. . . . Gott in hefn is going to haf pity upon me; He vill send me to mein friend in der grafe, und I dank Him for it—"

He clasped his hands.

"I have told our management before now that we ought to have a wardrobe department and lend the proper mourning costumes on hire," said the master of the ceremonies, addressing Villemot; "it is a want that is more and more

felt every day, and we have even now introduced improvements. But as this gentleman is chief mourner he ought to wear a cloak, and this one that I have brought with me will cover him from head to foot; no one need know that he is not in proper mourning costume.—Will you be so kind as to rise?"

Schmucke rose, but he tottered on his feet.

"Support him," said the master of the ceremonies, turning to Villemot; "you are his legal representative."

Villemot held Schmucke's arm while the master of the ceremonies invested Schmucke with the ample, dismal-looking garment worn by heirs-at-law in the procession to and from the house and the church. He tied the black silken cords under the chin, and Schmucke as heir was in "full dress."

"And now comes a great difficulty," continued the master of the ceremonies; "we want four bearers for the pall. . . . If nobody comes to the funeral, who is to fill the corners? It is half-past ten already," he added, looking at his watch; "they are waiting for us at the church."

"Oh! here comes Fraasier!" Villemot exclaimed, very imprudently; but there was no one to hear the tacit confession of complicity.

"Who is this gentleman?" inquired the master of the ceremonies.

"Oh! he comes on behalf of the family."

"Whose family?"

"The disinherited family. He is M. Camusot de Marville's representative."

"Good," said the master of the ceremonies, with a satisfied air. "We shall have two pall-bearers at any rate—you and he."

And, happy to find two of the places filled up, he took out some wonderful white buckskin gloves, and politely presented Fraasier and Villemot with a pair apiece.

"If you gentlemen will be so good as to act as pall-bearers—" said he.

Fraisier, in black from head to foot, pretentiously dressed, with his white tie and official air, was a sight to shudder at; he embodied a hundred briefs.

"Willingly, sir," said he.

"If only two more persons will come, the four corners will be filled up," said the master of the ceremonies.

At that very moment the indefatigable representative of the firm of Sonet came up, and, closely following him, the one man who remembered Pons and thought of paying him a last tribute of respect. This was a supernumerary at the theatre, the man who put out the scores on the music-stands for the orchestra. Pons had been wont to give him a five-franc piece once a month, knowing that he had a wife and family.

"Oh, Dobinard (Topinard)!" Schmucke cried out at the sight of him, "*you* love Pons!"

"Why, I have come to ask news of M. Pons every morning, sir."

"Efery morning! boor Dobinard!" and Schmucke squeezed the man's hand.

"But they took me for a relation, no doubt, and did not like my visits at all. I told them that I belonged to the theatre and came to inquire after M. Pons; but it was no good. They saw through that dodge, they said. I asked to see the poor dear man, but they never would let me come upstairs."

"Dat apominable Zipod!" said Schmucke, squeezing Topinard's horny hand to his heart.

"He was the best of men, that good M. Pons. Every month he used to give me five francs. . . . He knew that I had three children and a wife. My wife has gone to the church."

"I shall difide mein pread mit you," cried Schmucke, in his joy at finding at his side some one who loved Pons.

"If this gentleman will take a corner of the pall, we shall have all four filled up," said the master of the ceremonies.

There had been no difficulty over persuading the agent

for monuments. He took a corner the more readily when he was shown the handsome pair of gloves which, according to custom, were to be his property.

"A quarter to eleven! We absolutely must go down. They are waiting for us at the church."

The six persons thus assembled went down the staircase.

The cold-blooded lawyer remained a moment to speak to the two women on the landing. "Stop here, and let nobody come in," he said, "especially if you wish to remain in charge, Mme. Cantinet. Aha! two francs a day, you know!"

By a coincidence in nowise extraordinary in Paris, two hearses were waiting at the door, and two coffins standing under the archway; Cibot's funeral was to take place at the same hour. Nobody came to pay any tribute of affection to the "deceased friend of the arts," lying in state among the lighted tapers, but every porter in the neighborhood sprinkled a drop of holy water upon the second bier. And this contrast between the crowd at Cibot's funeral and the solitary state in which Pons was lying was made even more striking in the street. Schmucke was the only mourner that followed Pons's coffin; Schmucke, supported by one of the undertaker's men, for he tottered at every step. From the Rue de Normandie to the Rue d'Orléans and the church of Saint-François the two funerals went between a double row of curious onlookers, for everything (as was said before) makes a sensation in the quarter. Every one remarked the splendor of the white funeral car, with a big embroidered P suspended on a hatchment, and the one solitary mourner behind it; while the cheap bier that came after it was followed by an immense crowd. Happily, Schmucke was so bewildered by the throng of idlers and the rows of heads in the windows that he heard no remarks and only saw the faces through a mist of tears.

"Oh, it is the nutcracker!" said one, "the musician, you know—"

"Who can the pall-bearers be?"

"Pooh! play-actors."

"I say, just look at poor old Cibot's funeral. There is one worker the less. What a man! he could never get enough work!"

"He never went out."

"He never kept Saint Monday."

"How fond he was of his wife!"

"Ah! There is an unhappy woman!"

Rémonencq walked behind his victim's coffin. People condoled with him on the loss of his neighbor.

The two funerals reached the church. Cantinet and the doorkeeper saw that no beggars troubled Schmucke. Villemot had given his word that Pons's heir should be left in peace; he watched over his client, and gave the requisite sums; and Cibot's humble bier, escorted by sixty or eighty persons, drew all the crowd after it to the cemetery. At the church door Pons's funeral procession mustered four mourning-coaches, one for the priest and three for the relations: but one only was required, for the representative of the firm of Sonet departed during mass to give notice to his principal that the funeral was on the way, so that the design for the monument might be ready for the survivor at the gates of the cemetery. A single coach sufficed for Fraasier, Villemot, Schmucke, and Topinard; but the remaining two, instead of returning to the undertaker, followed in the procession to Père-Lachaise—a useless procession, not infrequently seen; there are always too many coaches when the dead are unknown beyond their own circle and there is no crowd at the funeral. Dear, indeed, the dead must have been in their lifetime if relative or friend will go with them so far as the cemetery in this Paris, where every one would fain have twenty-five hours in the day. But with the coachmen it is different; they lose their tips if they do not make the journey; so, empty or full, the mourning-coaches go to church and cemetery and return to the house for gratuities. A death is a sort of drinking-fountain for an unimagined crowd of thirsty mortals. The attendants at the church, the poor, the undertaker's men, the drivers and sextons, are creatures

like sponges that dip into a hearse and come out again saturated.

From the church door, where he was beset with a swarm of beggars (promptly dispersed by the beadle), to Père-Lachaise, poor Schmucke went as criminals went in old times from the Palais de Justice to the Place de Grève. It was his own funeral that he followed, clinging to Topinard's hand, to the one living creature besides himself who felt a pang of real regret for Pons's death.

As for Topinard, greatly touched by the honor of the request to act as pall-bearer, content to drive in a carriage, the possessor of a new pair of gloves—it began to dawn upon him that this was to be one of the great days of his life. Schmucke was driven passively along the road, as some unlucky calf is driven in a butcher's cart to the slaughter-house. Fraasier and Villemot sat with their backs to the horses. Now, as those know whose sad fortune it has been to accompany many of their friends to their last resting-place, all hypocrisy breaks down in the coach during the journey (often a very long one) from the church to the eastern cemetery, to that one of the burying-grounds of Paris in which all vanities, all kinds of display, are met, so rich is it in sumptuous monuments. On these occasions those who feel least begin to talk soonest, and in the end the saddest listen, and their thoughts are diverted.

"M. le Président had already started for the Court," Fraasier told Villemot, "and I did not think it necessary to tear him away from business; he would have come too late in any case. He is the next-of-kin; but as he has been disinherited and M. Schmucke gets everything, I thought that if his legal representative were present it would be enough."

Topinard lent an ear to this.

"Who was the queer customer that took the fourth corner?" continued Fraasier.

"He is an agent for a firm of monumental stone-masons. He would like an order for a tomb, on which he proposes to

put three sculptured marble figures—Music, Painting, and Sculpture shedding tears over the deceased.”

“It is an idea,” said Fraasier; “the old gentleman certainly deserved that much; but the monument would cost seven or eight hundred francs.”

“Oh! quite that!”

“If M. Schmucke gives the order, it cannot affect the estate. You might eat up a whole property with such expenses.”

“There would be a lawsuit, but you would gain it—”

“Very well,” said Fraasier, “then it will be his affair.—It would be a nice practical joke to play upon the monument-makers,” Fraasier added in Villemot’s ear; “for if the will is upset (and I can answer for that), or if there is no will at all, who would pay them?”

Villemot grinned like a monkey, and the pair began to talk confidentially, lowering their voices; but the man from the theatre, with his wits and senses sharpened in the world behind the scenes, could guess at the nature of their discourse; in spite of the rumbling of the carriage and other hindrances, he began to understand that these representatives of justice were scheming to plunge poor Schmucke into difficulties; and when at last he heard the ominous word “Clichy,”¹ the honest and loyal servitor of the stage made up his mind to watch over Pons’s friend.

At the cemetery, where three square yards of ground had been purchased through the good offices of the firm of Sonet (Villemot having announced Schmucke’s intention of erecting a magnificent monument), the master of the ceremonies led Schmucke through a curious crowd to the grave into which Pons’s coffin was about to be lowered; but here, at the sight of the square hole, the four men waiting with ropes to lower the bier, and the clergy saying the last prayer for the dead at the graveside, something clutched tightly at the German’s heart. He fainted away.

¹ The old debtors’ prison in the Rue de Clichy.

Sonet's agent and M. Sonet himself came to help Topinard to carry poor Schmucke into the marble-works hard by, where Mme. Sonet and Mme. Vitelot (Sonet's partner's wife) were eagerly prodigal of efforts to revive him. Topinard stayed. He had seen Fraasier in conversation with Sonet's agent, and Fraasier, in his opinion, had gallows-bird written on his face.

An hour later, toward half-past two o'clock, the poor, innocent German came to himself. Schmucke thought that he had been dreaming for the past two days; if he could only wake, he should find Pons still alive. So many wet towels had been laid on his forehead, he had been made to inhale salts and vinegar to such an extent that he opened his eyes at last. Mme. Sonet made him take some meat-soup, for they had put the pot on the fire at the marble-works.

"Our clients do not often take things to heart like this; still, it happens once in a year or two—"

At last Schmucke talked of returning to the Rue de Normandie, and at this Sonet began at once.

"Here is the design, sir," he said: "Vitelot drew it expressly for you, and sat up last night to do it. . . . And he has been happily inspired, it will look fine—"

"One of the finest in Père-Lachaise!" said little Mme. Sonet. "But you really ought to honor the memory of a friend who left you all his fortune."

The design, supposed to have been drawn on purpose, had as a matter of fact been prepared for de Marsay, the famous cabinet minister. His widow, however, had given the commission to Stidmann; people were disgusted with the tawdriness of the project, and it was refused. The three figures at that period represented the Three Days of July which brought the eminent Minister to power. Subsequently, Sonet and Vitelot had turned the Three Glorious Days—"les trois glorieuses"—into the Army, Finance, and the Family, and sent in the design for the sepulchre of the late lamented Charles Keller; and here again Stidmann took the commission. In the eleven years that followed, the sketch had been modified to suit all kinds of requirements, and now in

Vitelot's fresh tracing they reappeared as Music, Sculpture, and Painting.

"It is a mere trifle when you think of the details and cost of setting it up; for it will take six months," said Vitelot. "Here is the estimate and the order-form—seven thousand francs, sketch in plaster not included."

"If M. Schmucke would like marble," put in Sonet (marble being his special department), "it would cost twelve thousand francs, and monsieur would immortalize himself as well as his friend."

Topinard turned to Vitelot.

"I have just heard that they are going to dispute the will," he whispered, "and the relatives are likely to come by their property. Go and speak to M. Camusot, for this poor, harmless creature has not a farthing."

"This is the kind of customer that you always bring us," said Mme. Vitelot, beginning a quarrel with the agent.

Topinard led Schmucke away, and they returned home on foot to the Rue de Normandie, for the mourning-coaches had been sent back.

"Do not leaf me," Schmucke said, when Topinard had seen him safe into Mme. Sauvage's hands, and wanted to go.

"It is four o'clock, dear M. Schmucke. I must go home to dinner. My wife is a box-opener—she will not know what has become of me. The theatre opens at a quarter to six, you know."

"Yes, I know . . . but remember dat I am alone in die earth, dat I haf no friend. You dat haf shed a tear for Bons, enliden me; I am in teep tarkness, und Bons said dat I vas in der midst of shcoundrels."

"I have seen that plainly already; I have just prevented them from sending you to Clichy."

"*Gligy!*" repeated Schmucke; "I do not understand."

"Poor man! Well, never mind, I will come to you. Goot-by."

"Good-by; komm again soon," said Schmucke, dropping half-dead with weariness.

"Good-by, *môsieu*," said Mme. Sauvage, and there was something in her tone that struck Topinard.

"Oh, come, what is the matter now?" he asked banteringly. "You are attitudinizing like a traitor in a melodrama."

"Traitor yourself! Why have you come meddling here? Do you want to have a hand in the master's affairs, and swindle him, eh?"

"Swindle him! . . . Your very humble servant!" Topinard answered with superb disdain. "I am only a poor super at a theatre, but I am something of an artist, and you may as well know that I never asked anything of anybody yet! Who asked anything of you? Who owes you anything? eh, old lady!"

"You are employed at a theatre, and your name is—?"

"Topinard, at your service."

"Kind regards to all at home," said La Sauvage, "and my compliments to your missus, if you are married, mister. . . . That was all I wanted to know."

"Why, what is the matter, dear?" asked Mme. Cantinet, coming out.

"This, child—stop here and look after the dinner while I run round to speak to monsieur."

"He is down below, talking with poor Mme. Cibot, that is crying her eyes out," said Mme. Cantinet.

La Sauvage dashed down in such headlong haste that the stairs trembled beneath her tread.

"Monsieur!" she called, and drew him aside a few paces to point out Topinard.

Topinard was just going away, proud at heart to have made some return already to the man who had done him so many a kindness. He had saved Pons's friend from a trap, by a stratagem from that world behind the scenes in which every one has more or less ready wit. And within himself he vowed to protect a musician in his orchestra from future snares set for his simple sincerity.

"Do you see that little wretch?" said La Sauvage. "He

is a kind of honest man that has a mind to poke his nose into M. Schmucke's affairs."

"Who is he?" asked Fraasier.

"Oh! he is a nobody."

"In business there is no such thing as a nobody."

"Oh, he is employed at the theatre," said she; "his name is Topinard."

"Good, Mme. Sauvage! Go on like this, and you shall have your tobacconist's shop."

And Fraasier resumed his conversation with Mme. Cibot.

"So I say, my dear client, that you have not played openly and above-board with me, and that one is not bound in any way to a partner who cheats."

"And how have I cheated you?" asked La Cibot, hands on hips. "Do you think that you will frighten me with your sour looks and your frosty airs? You look about for bad reasons for breaking your promises, and you call yourself an honest man! Do you know what you are? You are a blackguard! Yes! yes! scratch your arms; but just pocket that—"

"No words, and keep your temper, dearie. Listen to me. You have been feathering your nest. . . . I found this catalogue this morning while we were getting ready for the funeral; it is all in M. Pons's handwriting, and made out in duplicate. And as it chanced, my eyes fell on this—"

And opening the catalogue, he read:

"No. 7. *Magnificent portrait painted on marble, by Sebastian del Piombo, in 1546. Sold by a family who had it removed from Terni cathedral. The picture, which represents a Knight-Templar kneeling in prayer, used to hang above a tomb of the Rossi family with a companion portrait of a Bishop, afterwards purchased by an Englishman. The portrait might be attributed to Rafael, but for the date. This example is, to my mind, superior to the portrait of Baccio Bandinelli in the Musée; the latter is a little hard, while the Templar, being painted upon 'lavagna,' or slate, has preserved its freshness of coloring.*"

"When I come to look for No. 7," continued Fraiser, "I find a portrait of a lady, signed 'Chardin,' without a number on it! I went through the pictures with the catalogue while the master of the ceremonies was making up the number of pall-bearers, and found that eight of those indicated as works of capital importance by M. Pons had disappeared, and eight paintings of no special merit, and without numbers, were there instead. . . . And finally, one was missing altogether, a little panel-painting by Metz, described in the catalogue as a masterpiece."

"And was *I* in charge of the pictures?" demanded La Cibot.

"No; but you were in a position of trust. You were M. Pons's housekeeper, you looked after his affairs, and he has been robbed—"

"Robbed! Let me tell you this, sir: M. Schmucke sold the pictures, by M. Pons's orders, to meet expenses."

"And to whom?"

"To Messrs. Elie Magus and Rémonencq."

"For how much?"

"I am sure I do not remember."

"Look here, my dear madame; you have been feathering your nest, and very snugly. I shall keep an eye upon you; I have you safe. Help me, I will say nothing! In any case you know that since you judged it expedient to plunder M. le Président Camusot, you ought not to expect anything from *him*."

"I was sure that this would all end in smoke, for me," said La Cibot, mollified by the words "I will say nothing."

Rémonencq chimed in at this point.

"Here are you finding fault with Mme. Cibot; that is not right!" he said. "The pictures were sold by private treaty between M. Pons, M. Magus, and me. We waited for three days before we came to terms with the deceased; he slept on his pictures. We took receipts in proper form; and if we gave Madame Cibot a few forty-franc pieces, it is the custom of the trade—we always do so in private houses when

we conclude a bargain. Ah! my dear sir, if you think to cheat a defenceless woman, you will not make a good bargain! Do you understand, master lawyer?—M. Magus rules the market, and if you do not come down off the high horse, if you do not keep your word to Mme. Cibot, I shall wait till the collection is sold, and you shall see what you will lose if you have M. Magus and me against you; we can get the dealers in a ring. Instead of realizing seven or eight hundred thousand francs, you will not so much as make two hundred thousand."

"Good, good, we shall see. We are not going to sell; or if we do, it will be in London."

"We know London," said Rémonencq. "M. Magus is as powerful there as at Paris."

"Good-day, madame; I shall sift these matters to the bottom," said Fraasier—"unless you continue to do as I tell you," he added.

"You little pickpocket!—"

"Take care! I shall be a justice of the peace before long." And with threats understood to the full upon either side, they separated.

"Thank you, Rémonencq!" said La Cibot; "it is very pleasant to a poor widow to find a champion."

Toward ten o'clock that evening, Gaudissart sent for Topinard. The manager was standing with his back to the fire, in a Napoleonic attitude—a trick which he had learned since he began to command his army of actors, dancers, *figurants*, musicians, and stage-carpenters. He grasped his left-hand brace with his right hand, always thrust into his waistcoat; his head was flung far back, his eyes gazed out into space.

"Ah! I say, Topinard, have you independent means?"

"No, sir."

"Are you on the lookout to better yourself somewhere else?"

"No, sir—" said Topinard, with a ghastly countenance.

"Why, hang it all, your wife takes the first row of boxes out of respect to my predecessor, who came to grief; I gave you the job of cleaning the lamps in the wings in the day-time, and you put out the scores. And that is not all, either. You get twenty sous for acting monsters and managing devils when a hell is required. There is not a super that does not covet your post, and there are those that are jealous of you, my friend; you have enemies in the theatre."

"Enemies!" repeated Topinard.

"And you have three children! the oldest takes children's parts at fifty centimes—"

"Sir!—"

"Allow me to speak—" thundered Gaudissart. "And in your position, you want to leave—"

"Sir!—"

"You want to meddle in other people's business, and put your finger into a will case.—Why, you wretched man, you would be crushed like an egg-shell! My patron is his Excellency, Monseigneur le Comte Popinot, a clever man and a man of high character, whom the King in his wisdom has summoned back to the privy council. This statesman, this great politician, has married his eldest son to a daughter of M. le Président de Marville, one of the foremost men among the high courts of justice; one of the leading lights of the law-courts. Do you know the law-courts? Very good. Well, he is cousin and heir to M. Pons, to our old conductor whose funeral you attended this morning. I do not blame you for going to pay the last respects to him, poor man. . . . But if you meddle in M. Schmucke's affairs, you will lose your place. I wish very well to M. Schmucke, but he is in a delicate position with regard to the heirs—and as the German is almost nothing to me, and the Président and Count Popinot are a great deal, I recommend you to leave the worthy German to get out of his difficulties by himself. There is a special Providence that watches over Germans, and the part of deputy guardian-angel would not

suit you at all. Do you see? Stay as you are—you cannot do better.”

“Very good, monsieur le directeur,” said Topinard, much distressed. And in this way Schmucke lost the protector sent to him by fate, the one creature that shed a tear for Pons, the poor super for whose return he looked on the morrow.

Next morning poor Schmucke awoke to a sense of his great and heavy loss. He looked round the empty rooms. Yesterday and the day before yesterday the preparations for the funeral had made a stir and bustle which distracted his eyes; but the silence which follows the day when the friend, father, son, or loved wife has been laid in the grave—the dull, cold silence of the morrow is terrible, is glacial. Some irresistible force drew him to Pons’s chamber, but the sight of it was more than the poor man could bear; he shrank away and sat down in the dining-room, where Mme. Sauvage was busy making breakfast ready.

Schmucke drew his chair to the table, but he could eat nothing. A sudden, somewhat sharp ringing of the door-bell rang through the house, and Mme. Cantinet and Mme. Sauvage allowed three black-coated personages to pass. First came Vitel, the justice of the peace, with his highly respectable clerk; the third was Fraasier, neither sweeter nor milder for the disappointing discovery of a valid will cancelling the formidable instrument so audaciously stolen by him.

“We have come to affix seals on the property,” the justice of the peace said gently, addressing Schmucke. But the remark was Greek to Schmucke; he gazed in dismay at his three visitors.

“We have come at the request of M. Fraasier, legal representative of M. Camusot de Marville, heir of the late Pons—” added the clerk.

“The collection is here in this great room, and in the bedroom of the deceased,” remarked Fraasier.

“Very well, let us go into the next room.—Pardon us, sir; do not let us interrupt with your breakfast.”

The invasion struck an icy chill of terror into poor Schmucke. Fraisier's venomous glances seemed to possess some magnetic influence over his victims, like the power of a spider over a fly.

"M. Schmucke understood how to turn a will, made in the presence of a notary, to his own advantage," he said, "and he surely must have expected some opposition from the family. A family does not allow itself to be plundered by a stranger without some protest; and we shall see, sir, which carries the day—fraud and corruption or the rightful heirs. . . . We have a right as next of kin to affix seals, and seals shall be affixed. I mean to see that the precaution is taken with the utmost strictness."

"Ach, mein Gott! how haf I offended against Hefn?" cried the innocent Schmucke.

"There is a good deal of talk about you in the house," said La Sauvage. "While you were asleep, a little whipper-snapper in a black suit came here, a puppy that said he was M. Hannequin's head-clerk, and must see you at all costs; but as you were asleep and tired out with the funeral yesterday, I told him that M. Villemot, Tabareau's head-clerk, was acting for you, and if it was a matter of business, I said, he might speak to M. Villemot. 'Ah, so much the better!' the youngster said. 'I shall come to an understanding with him. We will deposit the will at the Tribunal, after showing it to the President.' So at that, I told him to ask M. Villemot to come here as soon as he could.—Be easy, my dear sir, there are those that will take care of you. They shall not shear the fleece off your back. You will have some one that has beak and claws. M. Villemot will give them a piece of his mind. I have put myself in a passion once already with that abominable hussy, La Cibot, a porter's wife that sets up to judge her lodgers, forsooth, and insists that you have filched the money from the heirs; you locked M. Pons up, she says, and worked upon him till he was stark, staring mad. She got as good as she gave, though, the wretched woman. 'You are a thief and a bad

lot,' I told her; 'you will get into the police-courts for all the things that you have stolen from the gentlemen,' and she shut up."

The clerk came out to speak to Schmucke.

"Would you wish to be present, sir, when the seals are affixed in the next room?"

"Go on, go on," said Schmucke; "I shall be allowed to die in peace, I presume?"

"Oh, under any circumstances a man has a right to die," the clerk answered laughing; "most of our business relates to wills. But, in my experience, the universal legatee very seldom follows the testator to the tomb."

"I am going," said Schmucke. Blow after blow had given him an intolerable pain at the heart.

"Oh! here comes M. Villemot!" exclaimed La Sauvage.

"Mennesir Fillemod," said poor Schmucke, "represent me."

"I hurried here at once," said Villemot. "I have come to tell you that the will is completely in order; it will certainly be confirmed by the court, and you will be put in possession. You will have a fine fortune."

"*I? Ein fein vordune?*" cried Schmucke despairingly. That he of all men should be suspected of caring for the money!

"And meantime, what is the justice of the peace doing here with his wax candles and his bits of tape?" asked La Sauvage.

"Oh, he is affixing seals. . . . Come, M. Schmucke, you have a right to be present."

"No—go in yourself."

"But where is the use of the seals if M. Schmucke is in his own house and everything belongs to him?" asked La Sauvage, doing justice in feminine fashion, and interpreting the Code according to their fancy, like one and all of her sex.

"M. Schmucke is not in possession, madame; he is in M. Pons's house. Everything will be his, no doubt; but the

legatee cannot take possession without an authorization—an order from the Tribunal. And if the next-of-kin set aside by the testator should dispute the order, a lawsuit is the result. And as nobody knows what may happen, everything is sealed up, and the notaries representing either side proceed to draw up an inventory during the delay prescribed by the law. . . . And there you are!"

Schmucke, hearing such talk for the first time in his life, was completely bewildered by it; his head sank down upon the back of his chair—he could not support it, it had grown so heavy.

Villemot meanwhile went off to chat with the justice of the peace and his clerk, assisting with professional coolness to affix the seals—a ceremony which always involves some buffoonery and plentiful comments on the objects thus secured, unless indeed one of the family happens to be present. At length the party sealed up the chamber and returned to the dining-room, whither the clerk betook himself. Schmucke watched the mechanical operation which consists in setting the justice's seal at either end of a bit of tape stretched across the opening of a folding door; or, in the case of a cupboard or ordinary door, from edge to edge above the door-handle.

"Now for this room," said Fraasier, pointing to Schmucke's bedroom, which opened into the dining-room.

"But that is M. Schmucke's own room," remonstrated La Sauvage, springing in front of the door.

"We found the lease among the papers," Fraasier said ruthlessly; "there is no mention of M. Schmucke in it; it is taken out in M. Pons's name only. The whole place, and every room in it, is a part of the estate. And besides"—flinging open the door—"look here, monsieur le juge de la paix, it is full of pictures."

"So it is," answered the justice of the peace, and Fraasier thereupon gained his point.

"Wait a bit, gentlemen," said Villemot. "Do you know that you are turning the universal legatee out of doors, and as yet his right has not been called in question?"

"Yes, it has," said Fraasier; "we are opposing the transfer of the property."

"And upon what grounds?"

"You shall know that by and by, my boy," Fraasier replied banteringly. "At this moment, if the legatee withdraws everything that he declares to be his, we shall raise no objections, but the room itself will be sealed. And M. Schmucke may lodge where he pleases."

"No," said Villemot; "M. Schmucke is going to stay in his room."

"And how?"

"I shall demand an immediate special inquiry," continued Villemot, "and prove that we pay half the rent. You shall not turn us out. Take away the pictures, decide on the ownership of the various articles, but here my client stops—'my boy.'"

"I shall go out!" the old musician suddenly said. He had recovered energy during the odious dispute.

"You had better," said Fraasier. "Your course will save expense to you, for your contention would not be made good. The lease is evidence—"

"The lease! the lease!" cried Villemot, "it is a question of good faith—"

"That could only be proved as in a criminal case, by calling witnesses.—Do you mean to plunge into experts' fees and verifications, and orders to show cause why judgment should not be given, and law proceedings generally?"

"No, no!" cried Schmucke in dismay. "I shall turn out; I am used to it—"

In practice Schmucke was a philosopher, an unconscious cynic, so greatly had he simplified his life. Two pairs of shoes, a pair of boots, a couple of suits of clothes, a dozen shirts, a dozen bandanna handkerchiefs, four waistcoats, a superb pipe given to him by Pons, with an embroidered tobacco-pouch—these were all his belongings. Overwrought by a fever of indignation, he went into his room and piled his clothes upon a chair.

"All dese are mine," he said, with simplicity worthy of Cincinnatus. "Der biano is also mine."

Fraisier turned to La Sauvage. "Madame, get help," he said; "take that piano out and put it on the landing."

"You are too rough into the bargain," said Villemot, addressing Fraisier. "The justice of the peace gives orders here; he is supreme."

"There are valuables in the room," put in the clerk.

"And besides," added the justice of the peace, "M. Schmucke is going out of his own free will."

"Did any one ever see such a client!" Villemot cried indignantly, turning upon Schmucke. "You are as limp as a rag—"

"Vat dos it matter vere von dies?" Schmucke said as he went out. "Dese men haf tigers' faces. . . . I shall send somepody to vetch mein bits of dings."

"Where are you going, sir?"

"Vere it shall please Gott," returned Pons's universal legatee with supreme indifference.

"Send me word," said Villemot.

Fraisier turned to the head-clerk. "Go after him," he whispered.

Mme. Cantinet was left in charge with a provision of fifty francs paid out of the money that they found. The justice of the peace looked out; there Schmucke stood in the courtyard looking up at the windows for the last time.

"You have found a man of butter," remarked the justice.

"Yes," said Fraisier, "yes. The thing is as good as done. You need not hesitate to marry your granddaughter to Poulain; he will be head-surgeon at the Quinze-Vingts."¹

"We shall see.—Good-day, M. Fraisier," said the justice of the peace with a friendly air.

"There is a man with a head on his shoulders," remarked the justice's clerk. "The dog will go a long way."

By this time it was eleven o'clock. The old German

¹ The Asylum founded by St. Louis for three hundred blind people.

went like an automaton down the road along which Pons and he had so often walked together. Wherever he went he saw Pons, he almost thought that Pons was by his side; and so he reached the theatre just as his friend Topinard was coming out of it after a morning spent in cleaning the lamps and meditating on the manager's tyranny.

"Oh, shoost der ding for mel!" cried Schmucke, stopping his acquaintance. "Dopinart! you haf a lodging someveres, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"A home off your own?"

"Yes, sir."

"Are you villing to take me for ein poarder? Oh! I shall bay ver' vell; I haf nine hundert vranes of inkomm, und—I haf not ver' long to lif. . . . I shall gif no drouble vatefer. . . . I can eat onydings—I only vant to shmoke mein bipe. Und—you are der only von dat haf shed a tear for Bons mit me; und so, I lof you."

"I should be very glad, sir; but, to begin with, M. Gaudissart has given me a proper wigging—"

"*Wigging?*"

"That is one way of saying that he combed my hair for me."

"*Combed your hair?*"

"He gave me a scolding for meddling in your affairs. . . . So we must be very careful if you come to me. But I doubt whether you will stay when you have seen the place; you do not know how we poor devils live."

"I should rader der boor home of a goot-hearted mann dot haf mourned Bons, dan der Duileries mit men dot haf ein tiger's face. . . . I haf chust left tigers in Bons's house; dey vill eat up everydings—"

"Come with me, sir, and you shall see. But—well, anyhow, there is a garret. Let us see what Mme. Topinard says."

Schmucke followed like a sheep, while Topinard led the way into one of the squalid districts which might be called

the cancers of Paris—a spot known as the Cité Bordin. It is a slum out of the Rue de Bondy, a double row of houses run up by the speculative builder, under the shadow of the huge mass of the Porte Saint-Martin theatre. The pavement at the higher end lies below the level of the Rue de Bondy; at the lower it falls away toward the Rue des Mathurins du Temple. Follow its course and you find that it terminates in another slum running at right angles to the first—the Cité Bordin is, in fact, a T-shaped blind alley. Its two streets thus arranged contain some thirty houses, six or seven stories high; and every story, and every room in every story, is a workshop and a warehouse for goods of every sort and description, for this wart upon the face of Paris is a miniature Faubourg Saint-Antoine. Cabinet-work and brass-work, theatrical costumes, blown glass, painted porcelain—all the various fancy goods known as *l'article Paris* are made here. Dirty and productive like commerce, always full of traffic—foot-passengers, vans, and drays—the Cité Bordin is an unsavory-looking neighborhood, with a seething population in keeping with the squalid surroundings. It is a not unintelligent artisan population, though the whole power of the intellect is absorbed by the day's manual labor. Topinard, like every other inhabitant of the Cité Bordin, lived in it for the sake of the comparatively low rent, the cause of its existence and prosperity. His sixth-floor lodging, in the second house to the left, looked out upon the belt of green garden, still in existence, at the back of three or four large mansions in the Rue de Bondy.

Topinard's apartment consisted of a kitchen and two bedrooms. The first was a nursery with two little deal bedsteads and a cradle in it, the second was the bedroom, and the kitchen did duty as a dining-room. Above, reached by a short ladder, known among builders as a "trap-ladder," there was a kind of garret, six feet high, with a sash-window let into the roof. This room, given as a servant's bedroom, raised the Topinards' establishment from mere "rooms" to the dignity of a tenement, and the rent to a corresponding

sum of four hundred francs. An arched lobby, lighted from the kitchen by a small round window, did duty as an antechamber, and filled the space between the bedroom, the kitchen, and house doors—three doors in all. The rooms were paved with bricks, and hung with a hideous wall-paper at threepence a piece; the chimney-pieces that adorned them were of the kind called *capucines*—a shelf set on a couple of brackets painted to resemble wood. Here in these three rooms dwelt five human beings, three of them children. Any one, therefore, can imagine how the walls were covered with scores and scratches so far as an infant arm can reach.

Rich people can scarcely realize the extreme simplicity of a poor man's kitchen. A Dutch oven, a kettle, a gridiron, a saucepan, two or three dumpy cooking-pots, and a frying-pan—that was all. All the crockery in the place, white and brown earthenware together, was not worth more than twelve francs. Dinner was served on the kitchen table, which with a couple of chairs and a couple of stools completed the furniture. The stock of fuel was kept under the stove with a funnel-shaped chimney, and in a corner stood the wash-tub in which the family linen lay, often steeping over-night in soap-suds. The nursery ceiling was covered with clothes-lines, the walls were variegated with theatrical placards and woodcuts from newspapers or advertisements. Evidently the eldest boy, the owner of the school-books stacked in a corner, was left in charge while his parents were absent at the theatre. In many a French workingman's family, so soon as a child reaches the age of six or seven, it plays the part of mother to younger sisters and brothers.

From this bare outline, it may be imagined that the Topinards, to use the hackneyed formula, were "poor but honest." Topinard himself was verging on forty; Mme. Topinard, once leader of a chorus—mistress too, it was said, of Gaudissart's predecessor—was certainly thirty years old. Lolotte had been a fine woman in her day; but the misfortunes of the previous management had told upon her to such an extent, that it had seemed to her to be both advisable and

necessary to contract a stage-marriage with Topinard. She did not doubt but that, as soon as they could muster the sum of a hundred and fifty francs, her Topinard would perform his vows agreeably to the civil law, were it only to legitimize the three children, whom he worshipped. Meantime, Mme. Topinard sewed for the theatre wardrobe in the morning; and, with prodigious effort, the brave couple made nine hundred francs per annum between them.

"One more flight!" Topinard had twice repeated since they reached the third floor. Schmucke, engulfed in his sorrow, did not so much as know whether he was going up or coming down.

In another minute Topinard had opened the door; but before he appeared in his white workman's blouse Mme. Topinard's voice rang from the kitchen:

"There, there! children, be quiet! here comes papa!"

But the children, no doubt, did as they pleased with papa, for the oldest member of the little family, sitting astride a broomstick, continued to command a charge of cavalry (a reminiscence of the Cirque-Olympique), the second blew a tin trumpet, while the third did its best to keep up with the main body of the army. Their mother was at work on a theatrical costume.

"Be quiet! or I shall slap you!" shouted Topinard in a formidable voice; then in an aside for Schmucke's benefit—"Always have to say that!—Here, little one," he continued, addressing his Lolotte, "this is M. Schmucke, poor M. Pons's friend. He does not know where to go, and he would like to live with us. I told him that we were not very spick-and-span up here, that we lived on the sixth floor, and had only the garret to offer him; but it was no use, he would come—"

Schmucke had taken the chair which the woman brought him, and the children, stricken with sudden shyness, had gathered together to give the stranger that mute, earnest, so soon finished scrutiny characteristic of childhood. For a child, like a dog, is wont to judge by instinct rather than

reason. Schmucke looked up; his eyes rested on that charming little picture; he saw the performer on the tin trumpet, a little five-year-old maiden with wonderful golden hair.

"She looks like ein liddle German girl," said Schmucke, holding out his arms to the child.

"Monsieur will not be very comfortable here," said Mme. Topinard. "I would propose that he should have our room, at once, but I am obliged to have the children near me."

She opened the door as she spoke, and bade Schmucke come in. Such splendor as their abode possessed was all concentrated here. Blue cotton curtains with a white fringe hung from the mahogany bedstead and adorned the window; the chest of drawers, bureau, and chairs, though all made of mahogany, were neatly kept. The clock and candlesticks on the chimney-piece were evidently the gift of the bankrupt manager, whose portrait, a truly frightful performance of Pierre Grassou's, looked down upon the chest of drawers. The children tried to peep in at the forbidden glories.

"Monsieur might be comfortable in here," said their mother.

"No, no," Schmucke replied. "Eh! I haf not ver' long to lif, I only vant a corner to die in."

The door was closed, and the three went up to the garret. "Dis is der ding for me," Schmucke cried at once. "Pefore I lifd mit Bons, I vas nefer better lodged."

"Very well. A truckle-bed, a couple of mattresses, a bolster, a pillow, a couple of chairs, and a table—that is all that you need to buy. That will not ruin you—it may cost a hundred and fifty francs, with the crockeryware and strip of carpet for the bedside."

Everything was settled—save the money, which was not forthcoming. Schmucke saw that his new friends were very poor, and, recollecting that the theatre was only a few steps away, it naturally occurred to him to apply to the manager for his salary. He went at once, and found Gaudissart in his office. Gaudissart received him with the somewhat

stiffly polite manner which he reserved for professionals. Schmucke's demand for a month's salary took him by surprise, but on inquiry he found that it was due.

"Oh, confound it, my good man, a German can always count, even if he has tears in his eyes. . . . I thought that you would have taken the thousand francs that I sent you into account, as a final year's salary, and that we were quits."

"We haf receifed nodings," said Schmucke; "und gif I komm to you, it ees because I am in der shtreet, und haf not ein benny. How did you send us der ponus?"

"By your portress."

"By Montame Zipod!" exclaimed Schmucke. "She killed Bons, she robbed him, she sold him—she tried to purn his vill—she is a pad creature, a monster!"

"But, my good man, how come you to be out in the street without a roof over your head or a penny in your pocket, when you are the sole heir? That does not necessarily follow, as the saying is."

"They haf put me out at der door. I am a voreigner, I know nodings of die laws."

"Poor man!" thought Gaudissart, foreseeing the probable end of the unequal contest.—"Listen," he began, "do you know what you ought to do in this business?"

"I haf ein mann of pizness!"

"Very good, come to terms at once with the next-of-kin; make them pay you a lump sum of money down and an annuity, and you can live in peace—"

"I ask noding more."

"Very well. Let me arrange it for you," said Gaudissart. Fraasier had told him the whole story only yesterday, and he thought that he saw his way to making interest out of the case with the young Vicomtesse Popinot and her mother. He would finish a dirty piece of work, and some day he would be a privy councillor at least; or so he told himself.

"I gif you full powers."

"Well. Let us see. Now, to begin with," said Gaudissart, Napoleon of the boulevard theatres, "to begin with, here are a hundred crowns—" (he took fifteen louis from his purse and handed them to Schmucke).

"That is yours, on account of six months' salary. If you leave the theatre, you can repay me the money. Now for your budget. What are your yearly expenses? How much do you want to be comfortable? Come, now, scheme out a life for a Sardapalus—"

"I only need two suits of clothes, von for der vinter, von for der sommer."

"Three hundred francs," said Gaudissart.

"Shoes. Vour bairs."

"Sixty francs."

"Shtockings—"

"A dozen pairs—thirty-six francs."

"Half a tozzen shirts."

"Six calico shirts, twenty-four francs; as many linen shirts, forty-eight francs; let us say seventy-two. That makes four hundred and sixty-eight francs altogether.—Say five hundred, including cravats and pocket-handkerchiefs; a hundred francs for the laundress—six hundred. And now, how much for your board—three francs a day?"

"No, it ees too much."

"After all, you want hats; that brings it to fifteen hundred. Five hundred more for rent; that makes two thousand. If I can get two thousand francs per annum for you, are you willing? . . . Good securities."

"Und mein tabacco."

"Two thousand four hundred, then. . . . Oh! papa Schmucke, do you call that tobacco? Very well, the tobacco shall be given in.—So that is two thousand four hundred francs per annum."

"Dat ees not all! I should like som monny."

"Pin-monny!—Just so! Oh, these Germans! And calls himself an innocent, the old Robert Macaire!" thought Gau-

dissart. Aloud he said, "How much do you want? But this must be the last."

"It ees to bay a zacred debt."

"A debt!" said Gaudissart to himself. "What a shark it is! He is worse than an eldest son. He will invent a bill or two next! We must cut him short. This Fraasier cannot take large views.—What debt is this, my good man? Speak out."

"Dere vas but von mann dot haf mourned Bons mit me. . . . He haf a tear liddle girl mit wunderschönes haar; it vas as if I saw mine boor Deutschland dot I should nefer haf left. . . . Baris is no blace for die Germans; dey laugh at dem" (with a little nod as he spoke, and the air of a man who knows something of life in this world below).

"He is off his head," Gaudissart said to himself. And a sudden pang of pity for this poor innocent before him brought a tear to the manager's eyes.

"Ah! you understand, mennesir le directeur! Ver' goot. Dat mann mit die liddle taughter is Dobinard, vat tidies der orchestra und lights die lamps. Bons vas fery fond of him, und helped him. He vas der only von dat accombanied mien only friend to die church und to die grafe. . . . I vant dree tausend vrans for him, und dree tausend for die liddle vone—"

"Poor fellow!" said Gaudissart to himself.

Rough, self-made man though he was, he felt touched by this nobleness of nature, by a gratitude for a mere trifle, as the world views it; though for the eyes of this divine innocence the trifle, like Bossuet's cup of water, was worth more than the victories of great captains. Beneath all Gaudissart's vanity, beneath the fierce desire to succeed in life at all costs, to rise to the social level of his old friend Popinot, there lay a warm heart and a kindly nature. Wherefore he cancelled his too hasty judgments and went over to Schmucke's side.

"You shall have it all! But I will do better still, my dear Schmucke. Topinard is a good sort—"

"Yes. I haf chust peen to see him in his boor home, vere he ees happy mit his children—"

"I will give him the cashier's place. Old Baudrand is going to leave."

"Ah! Gott pless you!" cried Schmucke.

"Very well, my good, kind fellow, meet me at Berthier's office about four o'clock this afternoon. Everything shall be ready, and you shall be secured from want for the rest of your days. You shall draw your six thousand francs, and you shall have the same salary with Garangeot that you used to have with Pons."

"No," Schmucke answered. "I shall not lif. . . . I haf no heart for anydings; I feel that I am attacked—"

"Poor lamb!" Gaudissart muttered to himself as the German took his leave. "But, after all, one lives on mut-ton; and, as the sublime Béranger says, 'Poor sheep! you were made to be shorn,' " and he hummed the political squib by way of giving vent to his feelings. Then he rang for the office-boy.

"Call my carriage," he said.

"Rue de Hanovre," he told the coachman.

The man of ambitions by this time had reappeared; he saw the way to the Council of State lying straight before him.

And Schmucke? He was busy buying flowers and cakes for Topinard's children, and went home almost joyously.

"I am gifing die presents . . ." he said, and he smiled. It was the first smile for three months, but any one who had seen Schmucke's face would have shuddered to see it there.

"But dere is ein condition—"

"It is too kind of you, sir," said the mother.

"De liddle girl shall gif me a kiss and put die flowers in her hair, like die liddle German maidens—"

"Olga, child, do just as the gentleman wishes," said the mother, assuming an air of discipline.

"Do not scold mein liddle German girl," implored

Schmucke. It seemed to him that the little one was his dear Germany. Topinard came in.

"Three porters are bringing up the whole bag of tricks," he said.

"Oh! Here are two hundred francs to pay for everything . . ." said Schmucke. "But, mein friend, your Montame Dobinard is ver' nice; you shall marry her, is it not so? I shall give you thousand crowns, and the little one shall have thousand crowns for her tour, and you shall infest it in her name. . . . Und you are not to be ein zuper any more—you are to be de cashier at de teatre—"

"I? instead of old Baudrand?"

"Yes."

"Who told you so?"

"Mennesir Gautissart!"

"Oh! it is enough to send one wild with joy! . . . Eh! I say, Rosalie, what a rumpus there will be at the theatre! But it is not possible—"

"Our benefactor must not live in a garret—"

"Pshaw! for the few days that I have to live it is very comfortable," said Schmucke. "Goot-py; I am going to the cemetery, to see what they have done with Bons, and to order some flowers for his grave."

Mme. Camusot de Marville was consumed by the liveliest apprehensions. At a council held with Fraasier, Berthier, and Godeschal, the two last-named authorities gave it as their opinion that it was hopeless to dispute a will drawn up by two notaries in the presence of two witnesses, so precisely was the instrument worded by Leopold Hannequin. Honest Godeschal said that even if Schmucke's own legal adviser should succeed in deceiving him, he would find out the truth at last, if it were only from some officious barrister, the gentlemen of the robe being wont to perform such acts of generosity and disinterestedness by way of self-advertisement. And the two officials took their leave of the Présidente with a parting caution against

Fraisier, concerning whom they had naturally made inquiries.

At that very moment Fraisier, straight from the affixing of the seals in the Rue de Normandie, was waiting for an interview with Mme. de Marville. Berthier and Godeschal had suggested that he should be shown into the study; the whole affair was too dirty for the President to look into (to use their own expression), and they wished to give Mme. de Marville their opinion in Fraisier's absence.

"Well, madame, where are these gentlemen?" asked Fraisier, admitted to audience.

"They are gone. They advise me to give up," said Mme. de Marville.

"Give up!" repeated Fraisier, suppressed fury in his voice. "Give up! . . . Listen to this, madame:

" 'At the request of' . . . and so forth (I will omit the formalities) . . . 'Whereas there has been deposited in the hands of M. le Président of the Court of First Instance a will drawn up by Maîtres Léopold Hannequin and Alexandre Crottat, notaries of Paris, and in the presence of two witnesses, the Sieurs Brunner and Schwab, aliens domiciled at Paris, and by the said will the Sieur Pons, deceased, has bequeathed his property to one Sieur Schmucke, a German, to the prejudice of his natural heirs:

" 'Whereas the applicant undertakes to prove that the said will was obtained under undue influence and by unlawful means; and persons of credit are prepared to show that it was the testator's intention to leave his fortune to Mlle. Cécile, daughter of the aforesaid Sieur de Marville, and the applicant can show that the said will was extorted from the testator's weakness, he being unaccountable for his actions at the time:

" 'Whereas as the Sieur Schmucke, to obtain a will in his favor, sequestered the testator, and prevented the family from approaching the deceased during his last illness; and his subsequent notorious ingratitude was of a nature to scan-

dalize the house and residents in the quarter who chanced to witness it when attending the funeral of the porter at the testator's place of abode:

"Whereas as still more serious charges, of which applicant is collecting proofs, will be formally made before their worships the judges:

"I, the undersigned Registrar of the Court, etc., etc., on behalf of the aforesaid, etc., have summoned the *Sieur Schmucke*, pleading, etc., to appear before their worships the judges of the first chamber of the Tribunal; and to be present when application is made that the will received by *Maîtres Hannequin* and *Crottat*, being evidently obtained by undue influence, shall be regarded as null and void in law; and I, the undersigned, on behalf of the aforesaid, etc., have likewise given notice of protest, should the *Sieur Schmucke* as universal legatee make application for an order to be put into possession of the estate, seeing that the applicant opposes such order, and makes objection by his application bearing date of to-day, of which a copy has been duly deposited with the *Sieur Schmucke*, costs being charged to . . . etc., etc.'

"I know the man, *Mme. la Présidente*. He will come to terms as soon as he reads this little love-letter. He will consult *Tabareau*, and *Tabareau* will advise him to take our terms. Are you going to give the thousand crowns per annum?"

"Certainly. I only wish I were paying the first instalment now."

"It will be done in three days. The summons will come down upon him while he is stupefied with grief, for the poor soul regrets *Pons* and is taking the death to heart."

"Can the application be withdrawn?" inquired the lady.

"Certainly, madame. You can withdraw at any time."

"Very well, monsieur, let it be so . . . go on! Yes, the purchase of land that you have arranged for me is worth the trouble; and, besides, I have managed *Vitel's* business

—he is to retire, and you must pay Vitel's sixty thousand francs out of Pons's property. So, you see, you must succeed."

"Have you Vitel's resignation?"

"Yes, monsieur. M. Vitel has put himself in M. de Marville's hands."

"Very good, madame. I have already saved you sixty thousand francs which I expected to give to that vile creature Mme. Cibot. But I still require the tobacconist's license for the woman Sauvage, and an appointment to the vacant place of head-physician at the Quinze-Vingts for my friend Poulain."

"Agreed—it is all arranged."

"Very well. There is no more to be said. Every one is for you in this business, even Gaudissart, the manager of the theatre. I went to look him up yesterday, and he undertook to crush the workman who seemed likely to give us trouble."

"Oh, I know M. Gaudissart is devoted to the Popinots."

Fraisier went out. . Unluckily, he missed Gaudissart, and the fatal summons was served forthwith.

If all covetous minds will sympathize with the Présidente, all honest folk will turn in abhorrence from her joy when Gaudissart came twenty minutes later to report his conversation with poor Schmucke. She gave her full approval; she was obliged beyond all expression for the thoughtful way in which the manager relieved her of any remaining scruples by observations which seemed to her to be very sensible and just.

"I thought as I came, Mme. la Présidente, that the poor devil would not know what to do with the money. 'Tis a patriarchally simple nature. He is a child, he is a German, he ought to be stuffed and put in a glass case like a waxen image. Which is to say that, in my opinion, he is quite puzzled enough already with his income of two thousand five hundred francs, and here you are provoking him into extravagance—"

"It is very generous of him to wish to enrich the poor fellow who regrets the loss of our cousin," pronounced the *Présidente*. "For my own part, I am sorry for the little squabble that estranged M. Pons and me. If he had come back again, all would have been forgiven. If you only knew how my husband misses him! M. de Marville received no notice of the death, and was in despair; family claims are sacred for him, he would have gone to the service and the interment, and I myself should have been at the mass—"

"Very well, fair lady," said Gaudissart. "Be so good as to have the documents drawn up, and at four o'clock I will bring this German to you. Please remember me to your charming daughter the *Vicomtesse*, and ask her to tell my illustrious friend the great statesman, her good and excellent father-in-law, how deeply I am devoted to him and his, and ask him to continue his valued favors. I owe my life to his uncle the judge, and my success in life to him; and I should wish to be bound to both you and your daughter by the high esteem which links us with persons of rank and influence. I wish to leave the theatre and become a serious person."

"As you are already, *monsieur*!" said the *Présidente*.

"Adorable!" returned Gaudissart, kissing the lady's shrivelled fingers.

At four o'clock that afternoon several people were gathered together at Berthier's office: *Fraisier*, arch-concocter of the whole scheme, *Tabareau*, appearing on behalf of *Schmucke*, and *Schmucke* himself. Gaudissart had come with him. *Fraisier* had been careful to spread out the money on Berthier's desk, and so dazzled was *Schmucke* by the sight of the six thousand-franc banknotes for which he had asked, and six hundred-francs for the first quarter's allowance, that he paid no heed whatsoever to the reading of the document. Poor man, he was scarcely in full possession of his faculties, shaken as they had already been by so many shocks. Gaudissart had snatched him up on his return from the cemetery, where he had been talking with Pons,

promising to join him soon—very soon. So Schmucke did not listen to the preamble in which it was set forth that Maître Tabareau, bailiff, was acting as his proxy, and that the Présidente, in the interests of her daughter, was taking legal proceedings against him. Altogether, in that preamble, the German played a sorry part, but he put his name to the document, and thereby admitted the truth of Fraisier's abominable allegations; and so joyous was he over receiving the money for the Topinards, so glad to bestow wealth according to his little ideas upon the one creature who loved Pons, that he heard not a word of lawsuit nor compromise.

But in the middle of the reading a clerk came into the private office to speak to his employer. "There is a man here, sir, who wishes to speak to M. Schmucke," said he.

The notary looked at Fraisier, and, taking his cue from him, shrugged his shoulders.

"Never disturb us when we are signing documents. Just ask his name—is it a man or a gentleman? Is he a creditor?"

The clerk went and returned. "He insists that he must speak to M. Schmucke."

"His name?"

"His name is Topinard, he says."

"I will go out to him. Sign without disturbing yourself," said Gaudissart, addressing Schmucke. "Make an end of it; I will find out what he wants with us."

Gaudissart understood Fraisier; both scented danger.

"Why are you here?" Gaudissart began. "So you have no mind to be cashier at the theatre? Discretion is a cashier's first recommendation."

"Sir—"

"Just mind your own business; you will never be anything if you meddle in other people's affairs."

"Sir, I cannot eat bread if every mouthful of it is to stick in my throat. . . . Monsieur Schmucke!—M. Schmucke!" he shouted aloud.

Schmucke came out at the sound of Topinard's voice. He had just signed. He held the money in his hand.

"Thees ees for die liddle German maiden und for you," he said.

"Oh! my dear M. Schmucke, you have given away your wealth to inhuman wretches, to people who are trying to take away your good name. I took this paper to a good man, an attorney who knows this Fraasier, and he says that you ought to punish such wickedness; you ought to let them summon you and leave them to get out of it.—Read this," and Schmucke's imprudent friend held out the summons delivered in the *Cité Bordin*.

Standing in the notary's gateway, Schmucke read the document, saw the imputations made against him, and, all ignorant as he was of the amenities of the law, the blow was deadly. The little grain of sand stopped his heart's beating. Topinard caught him in his arms, hailed a passing cab, and put the poor German into it. He was suffering from congestion of the brain; his eyes were dim, his head was throbbing, but he had enough strength left to put the money into Topinard's hands.

Schmucke rallied from the first attack, but he never recovered consciousness, and refused to eat. Ten days afterward he died without a complaint; to the last he had not spoken a word. Mme. Topinard nursed him, and Topinard laid him by Pons's side. It was an obscure funeral; Topinard was the only mourner who followed the son of Germany to his last resting-place.

Fraasier, now a justice of the peace, is very intimate with the President's family, and much valued by the *Présidente*. She could not think of allowing him to marry "that girl of Tabareau's," and promises infinitely better things for the clever man to whom she considers that she owes not merely the pasture-land and the English cottage at Marville, but also the President's seat in the Chamber of Deputies, for M. le *Président* was returned at the general election in 1846.

Every one, no doubt, wishes to know what became of the heroine of a story only too veracious in its details; a chron-

icle which, taken with its twin sister the preceding volume,¹ proves that Character is the great social force. You, O amateurs, connoisseurs, and dealers, will guess at once that Pons's collection is now in question. Wherefore it will suffice if we are present during a conversation that took place only a few days ago in Count Popinot's house. He was showing his splendid collection to some visitors.

"M. le Comte, you possess treasures indeed," remarked a distinguished foreigner.

"Oh! as to pictures, nobody can hope to rival an obscure collector, one Elie Magus, a Jew, an old monomaniac, the prince of picture-lovers," the Count replied modestly. "And when I say nobody, I do not speak of Paris only, but of all Europe. When the old Cræsus dies, France ought to spare seven or eight millions of francs to buy the gallery. For curiosities, my collection is good enough to be talked about—"

"But how, busy as you are, and with a fortune so honestly earned in the first instance in business—"

"In the drug business," broke in Popinot; "you ask how I can continue to interest myself in things that are a drug in the market—"

"No," returned the foreign visitor, "no, but how do you find time to collect? The curiosities do not come to find you."

"My father-in-law owned the nucleus of the collection," said the young Vicomtesse; "he loved the arts and beautiful work, but most of his treasures came to him through me."

"Through you, madame?—So young! and yet have you such vices as this?" asked a Russian prince.

Russians are by nature imitative; imitative indeed to such an extent that the diseases of civilization break out among them in epidemics. The *bric-à-brac* mania had appeared in an acute form in St. Petersburg, and the Russians caused such a rise of prices in the "art line," as Rémonencq would say, that collections became impossible. The prince who spoke had come to Paris solely to buy *bric-à-brac*.

¹ "La Cousine Bette."

"The treasures came to me, prince, on the death of a cousin. He was very fond of me," added the Vicomtesse Popinot, "and he had spent some forty odd years since 1805 in picking up these masterpieces everywhere, but more especially in Italy—"

"And what was his name?" inquired the English lord.

"Pons," said Président Camusot.

"A charming man he was," piped the Présidente in her thin, flute tones, "very clever, very eccentric, and yet very good-hearted. This fan that you admire once belonged to Mme. de Pompadour; he gave it to me one morning with a pretty speech which you must permit me not to repeat," and she glanced at her daughter.

"Mme. la Vicomtesse, tell us the pretty speech," begged the Russian prince.

"The speech was as pretty as the fan," returned the Vicomtesse, who brought out the stereotyped remark on all occasions. "He told my mother that it was quite time that it should pass from the hands of vice into those of virtue."

The English lord looked at Mme. Camusot de Marville with an air of doubt not a little gratifying to so withered a woman.

"He used to dine at our house two or three times a week," she said; "he was so fond of us! We could appreciate him, and artists like the society of those who relish their wit. My husband was, besides, his one surviving relative. So when, quite unexpectedly, M. de Marville came into the property, M. le Comte preferred to take over the whole collection to save it from a sale by auction; and we ourselves much preferred to dispose of it in that way, for it would have been so painful to us to see the beautiful things, in which our dear cousin was so much interested, all scattered abroad. Elie Magus valued them, and in that way I became possessed of the cottage that your uncle built, and I hope you will do us the honor of coming to see us there."

Gaudissart's theatre passed into other hands a year ago, but M. Topinard is still the cashier. M. Topinard, however,

has grown gloomy and misanthropic; he says little. People think that he has something on his conscience. Wags at the theatre suggest that his gloom dates from his marriage with Lolotte. Honest Topinard starts whenever he hears Fraissier's name mentioned. Some people may think it strange that the one nature worthy of Pons and Schmucke should be found on the third floor beneath the stage of a boulevard theatre.

Mme. Rémonencq, much impressed with Mme. Fontaine's prediction, declines to retire to the country. She is still living in her splendid shop on the Boulevard de la Madeleine, but she is a widow now for the second time. Rémonencq, in fact, by the terms of the marriage contract, settled the property upon the survivor, and left a little glass of vitriol about for his wife to drink by mistake; but his wife, with the very best intentions, put the glass elsewhere, and Rémonencq swallowed the draught himself. The rascal's appropriate end vindicates Providence, as well as the chronicler of manners, who is sometimes accused of neglect on this head, perhaps because Providence has been so overworked by playwrights of late.

Pardon the transcriber's errors.

OLD GORIOT

OLD CORIOT

PREFACE

"LE PÈRE GORIOT" perhaps deserves to be ranked as that one of Balzac's novels which has united the greatest number of suffrages, and which exhibits his peculiar merits, not indeed without any of his faults, but with the merits in eminent, and the faults not in glaring, degree. It was written (the preface is dated 1834) at the time when his genius was at its very height, when it had completely burst the strange shell which had so long enveloped and cramped it, when the scheme of the "*Comédie Humaine*" was not quite finally settled (it never was that), but elaborated to a very considerable extent, when the author had already acquired most of the knowledge of the actual world which he possessed, and when his physical powers were as yet unimpaired by his enormous labor and his reckless disregard of "burning the candle at both ends." Although it exhibits, like nearly all his work, the complication of interest and scheme which was almost a necessity to him, that complication is kept within reasonable bounds, and managed with wonderful address. The history of Goriot and his daughters, the fortunes of Eugène de Rastignac, and the mysterious personality and operations of Vautrin, not only all receive due and unperplexed development, but work upon each other with that correspondence and interdependence which form the rarest gift of the novelist, and which, when present, too commonly have attached to them the curse of over-minuteness and complexity. No piece of Balzac's Dutch painting is worked out with such marvellous minuteness as the Pension Vauquer, and hardly any book of his has more lifelike studies of character.

It would, however, not be difficult to find books with an almost, if not quite, equal accumulation of attractions, which have somehow failed to make the mark that has been made by "*Le Père Goriot*." And the practiced critic of novels

knows perfectly well why this is. It is almost invariably, and perhaps quite invariably, because there is no sufficiently central interest, or because that interest is not of the broadly human kind. Had Goriot had no daughters, he would undoubtedly have been a happier man (or a less happy, for it is possible to take it both ways); but the history of his decadence and death never could have been such a good novel. It is because this history of the daughters—not exactly unnatural, not wholly without excuse, but as surely murderesses of their father as Goneril and Regan—at once unites and overshadows the whole, because of its intensity, its simple and suasive appeal, that “*Le Père Goriot*” holds the place it does hold. That it owes something in point of suggestion to “*Lear*” does not in the least impair its claims. The circumstances and treatment have that entire difference which, when genius is indebted to genius, pays all the score there is at once. And besides, “*Lear*” has offered its motive for three hundred years to thousands and millions of people who have been writing plays and novels, and yet there is only one “*Père Goriot*.”

It is, however, a fair subject of debate for those who like critical argument of the nicer kind, whether Balzac has or has not made a mistake in representing the ex-dealer in floury compounds as a sort of idiot outside his trade abilities and his love for his daughters. That in doing so he was guided by a sense of poetical justice and consistency—the same sense which made Shakespeare dwell on the ungovernable temper and the undignified haste to get rid of the cares of sovereignty that bring on and justify the woes of *Lear*—is undeniable. But it would perhaps not have been unnatural, and it would have been even more tragic, if the *ci-devant* manufacturer had been represented as more intellectually capable, and as ruining himself in spite of his better judgment. On this point, however, both sides may be held with equal ease and cogency, and I do not decide either way. Of the force and pathos of the actual representation, no two opinions are possible. There is hardly a touch of the

one fault which can be urged against Balzac very often with some, and sometimes with very great, justice—the fault of exaggeration and phantasmagoric excess. Here at least the possibilities of actual life, as translatable into literature, are not one whit exceeded; and the artist has his full reward for being true to art.

Almost equally free from the abnormal and the gigantic is the portraiture of Rastignac. Even those who demur to the description of Balzac as an impeccable chronicler of society must admit the extraordinary felicity of the pictures of the young man's introduction to the drawing-rooms of Mesdames de Restaud and de Beauséant. Neither Fielding nor Thackeray—that is to say, no one else in the world of letters—could have drawn with more absolute vividness and more absolute veracity a young man, not a *parvenu* in point of birth, not devoid of native cleverness and “star,” but hampered by the consciousness of poverty and by utter ignorance of the actual ways and current social fashions of the great world when he is first thrown, to sink or swim, into this great world itself. We may pass from the certain to the dubious, or at least the debatable, when we pass from Rastignac's first appearance to his later experiences. Here comes in what has been said in the general introduction as to the somewhat fantastic and imaginary, the conventional and artificial character of Balzac's world. But it must be remembered that for centuries the whole structure of Parisian society has been to a very great extent fantastic and imaginary, conventional and artificial. Men and women have always played parts there as they have played them nowhere else. And it must be confessed that some of the parts here, if planned to the stage, are played to the life—that of Madame de Beauséant especially.

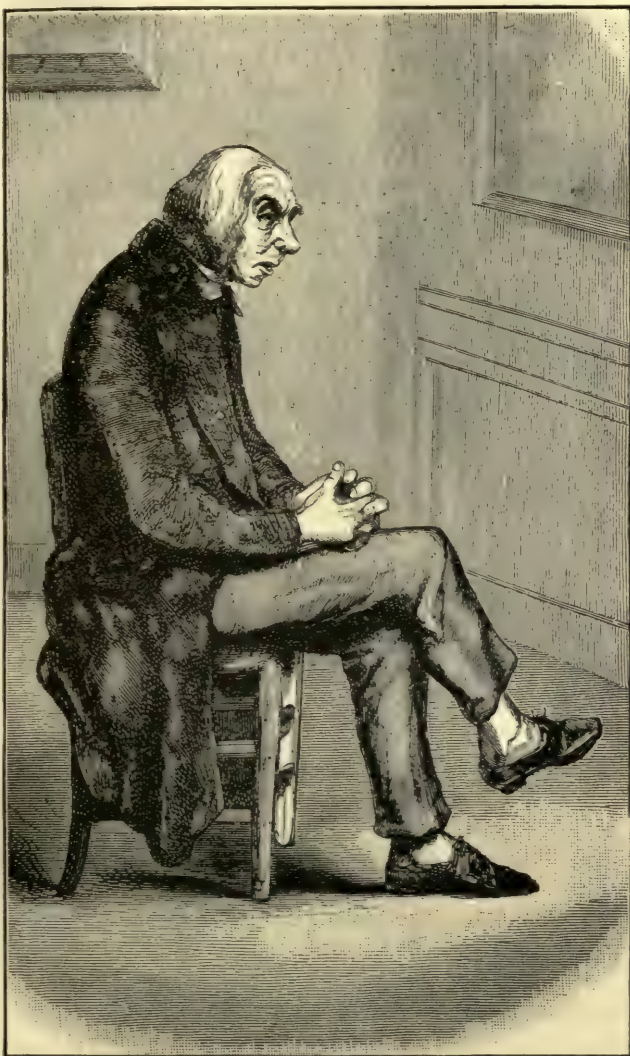
It is Vautrin on whom Balzac's decriers, if they are so hardy as to attack this most unattackable book of his at all, must chiefly fasten. It was long ago noticed—indeed, sober eyes both in France and elsewhere noticed it at the time—that the criminal, more or less virtuous, more or less terrible,

more or less superhuman, exercised a kind of sorcery over minds in France from the greatest to the least at this particular time, and even later. Not merely Balzac, but Victor Hugo and Georges Sand, succumbed to his fascinations; and after these three names it is quite unnecessary to mention any others. And Balzac's proneness to the enormous and gigantesque made the fascination peculiarly dangerous in his case. Undoubtedly the Vautrin who talks to Rastignac in the arbor is neither quite a real man nor quite the same man who is somewhat ignominiously caught by the treachery of his boarding-house fellows; undoubtedly we feel that with him we have left Shakespeare a long way behind, and are getting rather into the society of Bouchardy or Eugène Sue. But the genius is here likewise, and, as usual, it saves everything.

How it extends to the minutest and even the least savory details of Madame Vauquer's establishment, how it irradiates the meannesses and the sordidnesses of the inhabitants thereof, those who have read know, and those who are about to read this new presentation in English will find. Let it only be repeated, that if the rarest and strangest charms which Balzac can produce are elsewhere, nowhere else is his charm presented in a more pervading and satisfactory manner.

"Le Père Goriot" originally appeared as a book in 1835, published by Werdet and Spahmann in two volumes. It had, however, appeared serially in the "Revue de Paris" during the previous winter. The first and some subsequent editions had seven chapter-divisions, six of them headed. These, according to Balzac's usual practice, were swept away when the book became, in 1843, part of the "Scènes de la Vie Parisienne" and the "Comédie" itself. The transference to the "Vie Privée" which is accomplished in the *édition définitive* was only executed in accordance with notes found after Balzac's death, and is far from happy, the book being essentially Parisian.

G. S.



PERE GORIOT

Balzac, vol. fifteen—Old Goriot

OLD GORIOT

*To the great and illustrious Geoffrey Saint-Hilaire,
a token of admiration for his works and genius.*

De Balzac

MME. VAUQUER (*née* de Conflans) is an elderly person, who for the past forty years has kept a lodging-house in the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève, in the district that lies between the Latin Quarter and the Faubourg Saint-Marcel. Her house (known in the neighborhood as the Maison Vauquer) receives men and women, old and young, and no word has ever been breathed against her respectable establishment; but, at the same time, it must be said that as a matter of fact no young woman has been under her roof for thirty years, and that if a young man stays there for any length of time it is a sure sign that his allowance must be of the slenderest. In 1819, however, the time when this drama opens, there was an almost penniless young girl among Mme. Vauquer's boarders.

That word drama has been somewhat discredited of late; it has been overworked and twisted to strange uses in these days of dolorous literature; but it must do service again here, not because this story is dramatic in the restricted sense of the word, but because some tears may perhaps be shed *intra et extra muros* before it is over.

Will any one without the walls of Paris understand it? It is open to doubt. The only audience who could appreciate the results of close observation, the careful reproduction of minute detail and local color, are dwellers between the heights of Montrouge and Montmartre, in a vale of

crumbling stucco watered by streams of black mud, a vale of sorrows which are real and of joys too often hollow; but this audience is so accustomed to terrible sensations that only some unimaginable and wellnigh impossible woe could produce any lasting impression there. Now and again there are tragedies so awful and so grand by reason of the complication of virtues and vices that bring them about that egoism and selfishness are forced to pause and are moved to pity; but the impression that they receive is like a luscious fruit, soon consumed. Civilization, like the car of Juggernaut, is scarcely stayed perceptibly in its progress by a heart less easy to break than the others that lie in its course; this also is broken, and Civilization continues on her course triumphant. And you, too, will do the like; you who with this book in your white hand will sink back among the cushions of your armchair, and say to yourself, "Perhaps this may amuse me." You will read the story of Old Goriot's secret woes, and, dining thereafter with an unspoiled appetite, will lay the blame of your insensibility upon the writer, and accuse him of exaggeration, of writing romances. Ah! once for all, this drama is neither a fiction nor a romance! *All is true*—so true that every one can discern the elements of the tragedy in his own house, perhaps in his own heart.

The lodging-house is Mme. Vauquer's own property. It is still standing at the lower end of the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève, just where the road slopes so sharply down to the Rue de l'Arbalète that wheeled traffic seldom passes that way, because it is so stony and steep. This position is sufficient to account for the silence prevalent in the streets shut in between the dome of the Panthéon and the dome of the Val-de-Grâce, two conspicuous public buildings which give a yellowish tone to the landscape and darken the whole district that lies beneath the shadow of their leaden-hued cupolas.

In that district the pavements are clean and dry, there is neither mud nor water in the gutters, grass grows in the chinks of the walls. The most heedless passer-by feels the

depressing influences of a place where the sound of wheels creates a sensation; there is a grim look about the houses, a suggestion of a jail about those high garden walls. A Parisian straying into a suburb apparently composed of lodging-houses and public institutions would see poverty and dulness, old age lying down to die, and joyous youth condemned to drudgery. It is the ugliest quarter of Paris, and, it may be added, the least known. But, before all things, the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève is like a bronze frame for a picture for which the mind cannot be too well prepared by the contemplation of sad hues and sober images. Even so, step by step the daylight decreases, and the cicerone's droning voice grows hollower as the traveller descends into the Catacombs. The comparison holds good! Who shall say which is more ghastly, the sight of the bleached skulls or of dried-up human hearts?

The front of the lodging-house is at right angles to the road, and looks out upon a little garden, so that you see the side of the house in section, as it were, from the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève. Beneath the wall of the house front there lies a channel, a fathom wide, paved with cobble stones, and beside it runs a gravelled walk bordered by geraniums and oleanders and pomegranates set in great blue and white glazed earthenware pots. Access into the gravelled walk is afforded by a door, above which the words MAISON VAUQUER may be read, and beneath, in rather smaller letters, "*Lodgings for both sexes, etc.*"

During the day a glimpse into the garden is easily obtained through a wicket to which a bell is attached. On the opposite wall, at the further end of the gravelled walk, a green marble arch was painted once upon a time by a local artist, and in this semblance of a shrine a statue representing Cupid is installed; a Parisian Cupid, so blistered and disfigured that he looks like a candidate for one of the adjacent hospitals, and might suggest an allegory to lovers of symbolism. The half-obliterated inscription on the pedestal

beneath determines the date of this work of art, for it bears witness to the widespread enthusiasm felt for Voltaire on his return to Paris in 1777—

“Whoe’er thou art, thy master see;
He is, or was, or ought to be.”

At night the wicket gate is replaced by a solid door. The little garden is no wider than the front of the house; it is shut in between the wall of the street and the partition wall of the neighboring house. A mantle of ivy conceals the bricks and attracts the eyes of passers-by to an effect which is picturesque in Paris, for each of the walls is covered with trellised vines that yield a scanty dusty crop of fruit, and furnish besides a subject of conversation for Mme. Vauquer and her lodgers; every year the widow trembles for her vintage.

A straight path beneath the walls on either side of the garden leads to a clump of lime-trees at the further end of it; *lime-trees*, as Mme. Vauquer persists in calling them, in spite of the fact that she was a de Conflans, and regardless of repeated corrections from her lodgers.

The central space between the walks is filled with artichokes and rows of pyramid fruit-trees, and surrounded by a border of lettuce, pot-herbs, and parsley. Under the lime-trees there are a few green-painted garden seats and a wooden table, and hither, during the dog-days, such of the lodgers as are rich enough to indulge in a cup of coffee come to take their pleasure, though it is hot enough to roast eggs even in the shade.

The house itself is three stories high, without counting the attics under the roof. It is built of rough stone, and covered with the yellowish stucco that gives a mean appearance to almost every house in Paris. There are five windows in each story, in the front of the house; all the blinds visible through the small square panes are drawn up awry, so that the lines are all at cross purposes. At the side of the house there are but two windows on each floor, and the lowest of all are adorned with a heavy iron grating.

Behind the house a yard extends for some twenty feet, a space inhabited by a happy family of pigs, poultry, and rabbits; the wood-shed is situated on the further side, and on the wall between the wood-shed and the kitchen window hangs the meat-safe, just above the place where the sink discharges its greasy streams. The cook sweeps all the refuse out through a little door into the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Genève, and frequently cleanses the yard with copious supplies of water, under pain of pestilence.

The house might have been built on purpose for its present uses. Access is given by a French window to the first room on the ground floor, a sitting-room which looks out upon the street through the two barred windows already mentioned. Another door opens out of it into the dining-room, which is separated from the kitchen by the well of the staircase, the steps being constructed partly of wood, partly of tiles, which are colored and beeswaxed. Nothing can be more depressing than the sight of that sitting-room. The furniture is covered with horse-hair woven in alternate dull and glossy stripes. There is a round table in the middle, with a purplish-red marble top, on which there stands, by way of ornament, the inevitable white china tea-service, covered with a half-effaced gilt network. The floor is sufficiently uneven, the wainscot rises to elbow height, and the rest of the wall space is decorated with a varnished paper, on which the principal scenes from "Télémaque" are depicted, the various classical personages being colored. The subject between the two windows is the banquet given by Calypso to the son of Ulysses, displayed thereon for the admiration of the boarders, and has furnished jokes these forty years to the young men who show themselves superior to their position by making fun of the dinners to which poverty condemns them. The hearth is always so clean and neat that it is evident that a fire is only kindled there on great occasions; the stone chimney-piece is adorned by a couple of vases filled with faded artificial flowers imprisoned under glass shades, on either side of a bluish marble clock in the very worst taste.

The first room exhales an odor for which there is no name in the language, and which should be called the *odeur de pension*. The damp atmosphere sends a chill through you as you breathe it; it has a stuffy, musty, and rancid quality; it permeates your clothing; after-dinner scents seem to be mingled in it with smells from the kitchen and scullery and the reek of a hospital. It might be possible to describe it if some one should discover a process by which to distil from the atmosphere all the nauseating elements with which it is charged by the catarrhal exhalations of every individual lodger, young or old. Yet, in spite of these stale horrors, the sitting-room is as charming and as delicately perfumed as a boudoir, when compared with the adjoining dining-room.

The panelled walls of that apartment were once painted some color, now a matter of conjecture, for the surface is incrustated with accumulated layers of grimy deposit, which cover it with fantastic outlines. A collection of dim-ribbed glass decanters, metal disks with a satin sheen on them, and piles of blue edged earthenware plates of Touraine ware cover the sticky surfaces of the sideboards that line the room. In a corner stands a box containing a set of numbered pigeon-holes, in which the lodgers' table napkins, more or less soiled and stained with wine, are kept. Here you see that indestructible furniture never met with elsewhere, which finds its way into lodging-houses much as the wrecks of our civilization drift into hospitals for incurables. You expect in such places as these to find the weather-house whence a Capuchin issues on wet days; you look to find the execrable engravings which spoil your appetite, framed every one in a black varnished frame, with a gilt beading round it; you know the sort of tortoise-shell clock-case, inlaid with brass; the green stove, the Argand lamps, covered with oil and dust, have met your eyes before. The oilcloth which covers the long table is so greasy that a waggish *externe* will write his name on the surface, using his thumb nail as a style. The chairs are broken-down invalids; the wretched little hempen mats slip away from under your feet without

slipping away for good; and finally, the foot-warmers are miserable wrecks, hingeless, charred, broken away about the holes. It would be impossible to give an idea of the old, rotten, shaky, cranky, worm-eaten, halt, maimed, one-eyed, rickety, and ramshackle condition of the furniture without an exhaustive description, which would delay the progress of the story to an extent that impatient people would not pardon. The red tiles of the floor are full of depressions brought about by scouring and periodical renewings of color. In short, there is no illusory grace left to the poverty that reigns here; it is dire, parsimonious, concentrated, threadbare poverty; as yet it has not sunk into the mire, it is only splashed by it, and though not in rags as yet, its clothing is ready to drop to pieces.

This apartment is in all its glory at seven o'clock in the morning, when Mme. Vauquer's cat appears, announcing the near approach of his mistress, and jumps upon the sideboards to sniff at the milk in the bowls, each protected by a plate, while he purrs his morning greeting to the world. A moment later the widow shows her face; she is tricked out in a net cap attached to a false front set on awry, and shuffles into the room in her slipshod fashion. She is an oldish woman, with a bloated countenance, and a nose like a parrot's beak set in the middle of it; her fat little hands (she is as sleek as a church rat) and her shapeless, slouching figure are in keeping with the room that reeks of misfortune, where hope is reduced to speculate for the meanest stakes. Mme. Vauquer alone can breathe that tainted air without being disheartened by it. Her face is as fresh as a frosty morning in autumn; there are wrinkles about the eyes that vary in their expression from the set smile of a ballet-dancer to the dark, suspicious scowl of a discounter of bills; in short, she is at once the embodiment and interpretation of her lodging-house, as surely as her lodging-house implies the existence of its mistress. You can no more imagine the one without the other than you can think of a jail without a turnkey. The unwholesome corpulence of the little woman

is produced by the life she leads, just as typhus fever is bred in the tainted air of a hospital. The very knitted woollen petticoat that she wears beneath a skirt made of an old gown, with the wadding protruding through the rents in the material, is a sort of epitome of the sitting-room, the dining-room, and the little garden; it discovers the cook; it foreshadows the lodgers—the picture of the house is completed by the portrait of its mistress.

Mme. Vauquer at the age of fifty is like all women who "have seen a deal of trouble." She has the glassy eyes and innocent air of a trafficker in flesh and blood, who will wax virtuously indignant to obtain a higher price for her services, but who is quite ready to betray a Georges or a Pichegru, if a Georges or a Pichegru were in hiding and still to be betrayed, or for any other expedient that may alleviate her lot. Still, "she is a good woman at bottom," said the lodgers, who believed that the widow was wholly dependent upon the money that they paid her, and sympathized when they heard her cough and groan like one of themselves.

What had M. Vauquer been? The lady was never very explicit on this head. How had she lost her money? "Through trouble," was her answer. He had treated her badly, had left her nothing but her eyes to cry over his cruelty, the house she lived in, and the privilege of pitying nobody, because, so she was wont to say, she herself had been through every possible misfortune.

Sylvie, the stout cook, hearing her mistress's shuffling footsteps, hastened to serve the lodgers' breakfasts. Besides those who lived in the house, Mme. Vauquer took boarders who came for their meals; but these *externes* usually only came to dinner, for which they paid thirty francs a month.

At the time when this story begins, the lodging-house contained seven inmates. The best rooms in the house were on the first story, Mme. Vauquer herself occupying the least important, while the rest were let to a Mme. Couture, the widow of a commissary-general in the service of

the republic. With her lived Victorine Taillefer, a school-girl, to whom she filled the place of mother. These two ladies paid eighteen hundred francs a year.

The two sets of rooms on the second floor were respectively occupied by an old man named Poiret and a man of forty or thereabout, the wearer of a black wig and dyed whiskers, who gave out that he was a retired merchant, and was addressed as M. Vautrin. Two of the four rooms on the third floor were also let—one to an elderly spinster, a Mlle. Michonneau, and the other to a retired manufacturer of vermicelli, Italian paste and starch, who allowed the others to address him as "Old Goriot." The remaining rooms were allotted to various birds of passage, to impecunious students, who, like "Old Goriot" and Mlle. Michonneau, could only muster forty-five francs a month to pay for their board and lodging. Mme. Vauquer had little desire for lodgers of this sort; they ate too much bread, and she only took them in default of better.

At that time one of the rooms was tenanted by a law student, a young man from the neighborhood of Angoulême, one of a large family who pinched and starved themselves to spare twelve hundred francs a year for him. Misfortune had accustomed Eugène de Rastignac, for that was his name, to work. He belonged to the number of young men who know as children that their parents' hopes are centred on them, and deliberately prepare themselves for a great career, subordinating their studies from the first to this end, carefully watching the indications of the course of events, calculating the probable turn that affairs will take, that they may be the first to profit by them. But for his observant curiosity, and the skill with which he managed to introduce himself into the salons of Paris, this story would not have been colored by the tones of truth which it certainly owes to him, for they are entirely due to his penetrating sagacity and desire to fathom the mysteries of an appalling condition of things, which was concealed as carefully by the victim as by those who had brought it to pass.

Above the third story there was a garret where the linen was hung to dry, and a couple of attics. Christophe, the man-of-all-work, slept in one, and Sylvie, the stout cook, in the other. Besides the seven inmates thus enumerated, taking one year with another, some eight law or medical students dined in the house, as well as two or three regular comers who lived in the neighborhood. There were usually eighteen people at dinner, and there was room, if need be, for twenty at Mme. Vauquer's table; at breakfast, however, only the seven lodgers appeared. It was almost like a family party. Every one came down in dressing-gown and slippers, and the conversation usually turned on anything that had happened the evening before; comments on the dress or appearance of the dinner contingent were exchanged in friendly confidence.

These seven lodgers were Mme. Vauquer's spoiled children. Among them she distributed, with astronomical precision, the exact proportion of respect and attention due to the varying amounts they paid for their board. One single consideration influenced all these human beings thrown together by chance. The two second-floor lodgers only paid seventy-two francs a month. Such prices as these are confined to the Faubourg Saint-Marcel and the district between La Bourbe and the Salpêtrière; and, as might be expected, poverty, more or less apparent, weighed upon them all, Mme. Couture being the sole exception to the rule.

The dreary surroundings were reflected in the costumes of the inmates of the house; all were alike threadbare. The color of the men's coats was problematical; such shoes, in more fashionable quarters, are only to be seen lying in the gutter; the cuffs and collars were worn and frayed at the edges; every limp article of clothing looked like the ghost of its former self. The women's dresses were faded, old-fashioned, dyed and re-dyed; they wore gloves that were glazed with hard wear, much-mended lace, dingy ruffles, crumpled muslin fichus. So much for their clothing; but, for the most part, their frames were solid enough; their con-

stitutions had weathered the storms of life; their cold, hard faces were worn like coins that have been withdrawn from circulation, but there were greedy teeth behind the withered lips. Dramas brought to a close or still in progress are foreshadowed by the sight of such actors as these, not the dramas that are played before the footlights and against a background of painted canvas, but dumb dramas of life, frost-bound dramas that sear hearts like fire, dramas that do not end with the actors' lives.

Mlle. Michonneau, that elderly young lady, screened her weak eyes from the daylight by a soiled green silk shade with a rim of brass, an object fit to scare away the Angel of Pity himself. Her shawl, with its scanty, draggled fringe, might have covered a skeleton, so meagre and angular was the form beneath it. Yet she must have been pretty and shapely once. What corrosive had destroyed the feminine outlines? Was it trouble, or vice, or greed? Had she loved too well? Had she been a second-hand clothes dealer, a frequenter of the backstairs of great houses, or had she been merely a courtesan? Was she expiating the flaunting triumphs of a youth overcrowded with pleasures by an old age in which she was shunned by every passer-by? Her vacant gaze sent a chill through you; her shrivelled face seemed like a menace. Her voice was like the shrill, thin note of the grasshopper sounding from the thicket when winter is at hand. She said that she had nursed an old gentleman, ill of catarrh of the bladder, and left to die by his children, who thought that he had nothing left. His bequest to her, a life annuity of a thousand francs, was periodically disputed by his heirs, who mingled slander with their persecutions. In spite of the ravages of conflicting passions, her face retained some traces of its former fairness and fineness of tissue, some vestiges of the physical charms of her youth still survived.

M. Poiret was a sort of automaton. He might be seen any day sailing like a gray shadow along the walks of the Jardin des Plantes, on his head a shabby cap, a cane with

an old yellow ivory handle in the tips of his thin fingers; the outspread skirts of his threadbare overcoat failed to conceal his meagre figure; his breeches hung loosely on his shrunken limbs; the thin, blue-stockinged legs trembled like those of a drunken man; there was a notable breach of continuity between the dingy white waistcoat and crumpled shirt frills and the cravat twisted about a throat like a turkey gobbler's; altogether, his appearance set people wondering whether this outlandish ghost belonged to the audacious race of the sons of Japhet who flutter about on the Boulevard Italien. What kind of toil could have so shrivelled him? What devouring passions had darkened that bulbous countenance, which would have seemed outrageous as a caricature? What had he been? Well, perhaps he had been part of the machinery of justice, a clerk in the office to which the executioner sends in his accounts—so much for providing black veils for parricides, so much for sawdust, so much for pulleys and cord for the knife. Or he might have been a receiver at the door of a public slaughter-house, or a sub-inspector of nuisances. Indeed, the man appeared to have been one of the beasts of burden in our great social mill; one of those Parisian *Ratons* whom their *Bertrands* do not even know by sight; a pivot in the obscure machinery that disposes of misery and things unclean; one of those men, in short, at sight of whom we are prompted to remark that, "After all, we cannot do without them."

Stately Paris ignores the existence of these faces bleached by moral or physical suffering; but, then, Paris is in truth an ocean that no line can plumb. You may survey its surface and describe it; but no matter what pains you take with your investigations and recognizances, no matter how numerous and painstaking the toilers in this sea, there will always be lonely and unexplored regions in its depths, caverns unknown, flowers and pearls and monsters of the deep overlooked or forgotten by the divers of literature. The *Maison Vauquer* is one of these curious monstrosities.

Two, however, of Mme. Vauquer's boarders formed a striking contrast to the rest. There was a sickly pallor, such as is often seen in anæmic girls, in Mlle. Victorine Taillefer's face; and her unvarying expression of sadness, like her embarrassed manner and pinched look, was in keeping with the general wretchedness of the establishment in the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève, which forms a background to this picture; but her face was young, there was youthfulness in her voice and elasticity in her movements. This young misfortune was not unlike a shrub, newly planted in an uncongenial soil, where its leaves have already begun to wither. The outlines of her figure, revealed by her dress of the simplest and cheapest materials, were also youthful. There was the same kind of charm about her too slender form, her faintly colored face and light-brown hair, that modern poets find in medieval statuettes; and a sweet expression, a look of Christian resignation in the dark gray eyes. She was pretty by force of contrast; if she had been happy, she would have been charming. Happiness is the poetry of woman, as the toilet is her tinsel. If the delightful excitement of a ball had made the pale face glow with color; if the delights of a luxurious life had brought the color to the wan cheeks that were slightly hollowed already; if love had put light into the sad eyes, then Victorine might have ranked among the fairest; but she lacked the two things which create woman a second time—pretty dresses and love-letters.

A book might have been made of her story. Her father was persuaded that he had sufficient reason for declining to acknowledge her, and allowed her a bare six hundred francs a year; he had further taken measures to disinherit his daughter, and had converted all his real estate into personalty, that he might leave it undivided to his son. Victorine's mother had died broken-hearted in Mme. Couture's house; and the latter, who was a near relation, had taken charge of the little orphan. Unluckily, the widow of the commissary-general to the armies of the Republic had

nothing in the world but her jointure and her widow's pension, and some day she might be obliged to leave the helpless, inexperienced girl to the mercy of the world. The good soul, therefore, took Victorine to mass every Sunday, and to confession once a fortnight, thinking that, in any case, she would bring up her ward to be devout. She was right; religion offered a solution of the problem of the young girl's future. The poor child loved the father who refused to acknowledge her. Once every year she tried to see him to deliver her mother's message of forgiveness, but every year hitherto she had knocked at that door in vain; her father was inexorable. Her brother, her only means of communication, had not come to see her for four years, and had sent her no assistance; yet she prayed to God to unseal her father's eyes and to soften her brother's heart, and no accusations mingled with her prayers. Mme. Couture and Mme. Vauquer exhausted the vocabulary of abuse, and failed to find words that did justice to the banker's iniquitous conduct; but while they heaped execrations on the millionaire, Victorine's words were as gentle as the moan of the wounded dove, and affection found expression even in the cry drawn from her by pain.

Eugène de Rastignac was a thoroughly southern type; he had a fair complexion, blue eyes, black hair. In his figure, manner, and his whole bearing it was easy to see that he either came of a noble family, or that, from his earliest childhood, he had been gently bred. If he was careful of his wardrobe, only taking last year's clothes into daily wear, still upon occasion he could issue forth as a young man of fashion. Ordinarily he wore a shabby coat and waistcoat, the limp black cravat, untidily knotted, that students affect, trousers that matched the rest of his costume, and boots that had been re-soled.

Vautrin (the man of forty with the dyed whiskers) marked a transition stage between these two young people and the others. He was the kind of man that calls forth the remark: "He looks a jovial sort!" He had broad shoulders, a well-

developed chest, muscular arms, strong square-fisted hands; the joints of his fingers were covered with tufts of fiery red hair. His face was furrowed by premature wrinkles; there was a certain hardness about it in spite of his bland and insinuating manner. His bass voice was by no means unpleasant, and was in keeping with his boisterous laughter. He was always obliging, always in good spirits; if anything went wrong with one of the locks, he would soon unscrew it, take it to pieces, file it, oil and clean and set it in order, and put it back in its place again: "I am an old hand at it," he used to say. Not only so, he knew all about ships, the sea, France, foreign countries, men, business, law, great houses and prisons—there was nothing that he did not know. If any one complained rather more than usual, he would offer his services at once. He had several times loaned money to Mme. Vauquer, or to the boarders; but, somehow, those whom he obliged felt that they would sooner face death than fail to repay him; a certain resolute look, sometimes seen on his face, inspired fear of him, for all his appearance of easy good-nature. In the way he spat there was an imperturbable coolness which seemed to indicate that this was a man who would not stick at a crime to extricate himself from a false position. His eyes, like those of a pitiless judge, seemed to go to the very bottom of all questions, to read all natures, all feelings, and thoughts. His habit of life was very regular; he usually went out after breakfast, returning in time for dinner, and disappeared for the rest of the evening, letting himself in about midnight with a latch key, a privilege that Mme. Vauquer accorded to no other boarder. But then he was on very good terms with the widow; he used to call her "mamma," and put his arm round her waist, a piece of flattery perhaps not appreciated to the full! The worthy woman might imagine this to be an easy feat; but, as a matter of fact, no arm but Vautrin's was long enough to encircle her.

It was a characteristic trait of his generously to pay fifteen francs a month for the cup of coffee with a dash of brandy

in it, which he took after dinner. Less superficial observers than young men engulfed by the whirlpool of Parisian life, or old men who took no interest in anything that did not directly concern them, would not have stopped short at the vaguely unsatisfactory impression that Vautrin made upon them. He knew or guessed the concerns of every one about him; but none of them had been able to penetrate his thoughts, or to discover his occupation. He had deliberately made his apparent good-nature, his unfailing readiness to oblige, and his high spirits into a barrier between himself and the rest of them, but not seldom he gave glimpses of appalling depths of character. He seemed to delight in scourging the upper classes of society with the lash of his tongue, to take pleasure in convicting it of inconsistency, in mocking at law and order with some grim jest worthy of Juvenal, as if some grudge against the social system rankled in him, as if there were some mystery carefully hidden away in his life.

Mlle. Taillefer felt attracted, perhaps unconsciously, by the strength of the one man and the good looks of the other; her stolen glances and secret thoughts were divided between them; but neither of them seemed to take any notice of her, although some day a chance might alter her position, and she would be a wealthy heiress. For that matter, there was not a soul in the house who took any trouble to investigate the various chronicles of misfortunes, real or imaginary, related by the rest. Each one regarded the others with indifference, tempered by suspicion; it was a natural result of their relative positions. Practical assistance not one of them could give, this they all knew, and they had long since exhausted their stock of condolence over previous discussions of their grievances. They were in something the same position as an elderly couple who have nothing left to say to each other. The routine of existence kept them in contact, but they were parts of a mechanism which wanted oil. There was not one of them but would have passed a blind man begging in the street, not one that felt moved to pity by a tale of misfortune,

not one who did not see in death the solution of the all-absorbing problem of misery which left them cold to the most terrible anguish in others.

The happiest of these hapless beings was certainly Mme. Vauquer, who reigned supreme over this hospital supported by voluntary contributions. For her, the little garden, which silence, and cold, and rain, and drought combined to make as dreary as an Asian *steppe*, was a pleasant shaded nook; the gaunt yellow house, the musty odors of a back shop had charms for her, and for her alone. Those cells belonged to her. She fed those convicts condemned to penal servitude for life, and her authority was recognized among them. Where else in Paris would they have found wholesome food in sufficient quantity at the prices she charged them, and rooms which they were at liberty to make, if not exactly elegant or comfortable, at any rate clean and healthy? If she had committed some flagrant act of injustice, the victim would have borne it in silence.

Such a gathering contained, as might have been expected, the elements out of which a complete society might be constructed. And, as in a school, as in the world itself, there was among the eighteen men and women who met round the dinner table a poor creature, despised by all the others, condemned to be the butt of all their jokes. At the beginning of Eugène de Rastignac's second twelvemonth, this figure suddenly started out into bold relief against the background of human forms and faces among which the law student was yet to live for another two years to come. This laughing-stock was the retired vermicelli-merchant, old Goriot, upon whose face a painter, like the historian, would have concentrated all the light in his picture.

How had it come about that the boarders regarded him with a half-malignant contempt? Why did they subject the oldest among their number to a kind of persecution, in which there was mingled some pity, but no respect for his misfortunes? Had he brought it upon himself by some eccentricity or absurdity, which is less easily forgiven or forgotten than

more serious defects? The question strikes at the root of many a social injustice. Perhaps it is only human nature to inflict suffering on anything that will endure suffering, whether by reason of its genuine humility, or indifference, or sheer helplessness. Do we not, one and all, like to feel our strength even at the expense of some one or of something? The poorest sample of humanity, the street arab, will pull the bell handle at every street door in bitter weather, and scramble up to write his name on the unsullied marble of a monument.

In the year 1813, at the age of sixty-nine or thereabout, "Old Goriot" had sold his business and retired—to Mme. Vauquer's boarding-house. When he first came there he had taken the rooms now occupied by Mme. Couture; he had paid twelve hundred francs a year like a man to whom five louis more or less was a mere trifle. For him Mme. Vauquer had made various improvements in the three rooms destined for his use, in consideration of a certain sum paid in advance, so it was said, for the miserable furniture, that is to say, for some yellow cotton curtains, a few chairs of stained wood covered with Utrecht velvet, several wretched colored prints in frames, and wall-papers that a little suburban tavern would have disdained. Possibly it was the careless generosity with which old Goriot allowed himself to be overreached at this period of his life (they called him Monsieur Goriot very respectfully then) that gave Mme. Vauquer the meanest opinion of his business abilities; she looked on him as an imbecile where money was concerned.

Goriot had brought with him a considerable wardrobe, the gorgeous outfit of a retired tradesman who denies himself nothing. Mme. Vauquer's astonished eyes beheld no less than eighteen cambric-fronted shirts, the splendor of their fineness being enhanced by a pair of pins each bearing a large diamond, and connected by a short chain, an ornament which adorned the vermicelli-maker's shirt front. He usually wore a coat of corn-flower blue; his rotund and portly person was still further set off by a clean white waistcoat, and a gold

chain and seals which dangled over that broad expanse. When his hostess accused him of being "a bit of a beau," he smiled with the vanity of a citizen whose foible is gratified. His cupboards (*ormoires*, as he called them in the popular dialect) were filled with a quantity of plate that he brought with him. The widow's eyes gleamed as she obligingly helped him to unpack the soup ladles, table-spoons, forks, cruet-stands, tureens, dishes, and breakfast services—all of silver, which were duly arranged upon the shelves, besides a few more or less handsome pieces of plate, all weighing no inconsiderable number of ounces; he could not bring himself to part with these gifts that reminded him of past domestic festivals.

"This was my wife's present to me on the first anniversary of our wedding-day," he said to Mme. Vauquer, as he put away a little silver posset dish, with two turtle-doves billing on the cover. "Poor dear! she spent on it all the money she had saved before we married. Do you know, I would sooner scratch the earth with my nails for a living, madame, than part with that. But I shall be able to take my coffee out of it every morning for the rest of my days, thank the Lord! I am not to be pitied. There's not much fear of my starving for some time to come."

Finally, Mme. Vauquer's magpie's eye had discovered and read certain entries in the list of shareholders in the funds, and, after a rough calculation, was disposed to credit Goriot (worthy man) with something like ten thousand francs a year. From that day forward Mme. Vauquer (*née de Conflans*), who, as a matter of fact, had seen forty-eight summers, though she would only own to thirty-nine of them—Mme. Vauquer had her own ideas. Though Goriot's eyes seemed to have shrunk in their sockets, though they were weak and watery, owing to some glandular affection which compelled him to wipe them continually, she considered him to be a very gentlemanly and pleasant-looking man. Moreover, the widow saw favorable indications of character in the well-developed calves of his legs and in his square-shaped

nose, indications still further borne out by the worthy man's full-moon countenance and look of stupid good-nature. This, in all probability, was a strongly-built animal, whose brains mostly consisted in a capacity for affection. His hair, worn in *ailles de pigeon*, and duly powdered every morning by the barber from the École Polytechnique, described five points on his low forehead, and made an elegant setting to his face. Though his manners were somewhat boorish, he was always as neat as a new pin, and he took his snuff in a lordly way, like a man who knows that his snuff-box is always likely to be filled with maccaboy; so that when Mme. Vauquer lay down to rest on the day of M. Goriot's installation, her heart, like a larded partridge, sweltered before the fire of a burning desire to shake off the shroud of Vauquer and rise again as Goriot. She would marry again, sell her boarding-house, give her hand to this fine flower of citizenship, become a lady of consequence in the quarter, and ask for subscriptions for charitable purposes; she would make little Sunday excursions to Choisy, Soisy, Gentilly; she would have a box at the theatre when she liked, instead of waiting for the author's tickets that one of her boarders sometimes gave her, in July; the whole Eldorado of a little Parisian household rose up before Mme. Vauquer in her dreams. Nobody knew that she herself possessed forty thousand francs, accumulated *sou by sou*, that was her secret; surely as far as money was concerned she was a very tolerable match. "And in other respects, I am quite his equal," she said to herself, turning as if to assure herself of the charms of a form that the portly Sylvie found molded in down feathers every morning.

For three months from that day Mme. Veuve Vauquer availed herself of the services of M. Goriot's coiffeur, and went to some expense over her toilet, expense justifiable on the ground that she owed it to herself and her establishment to pay some attention to appearances when such highly-respectable persons honored her house with their presence. She expended no small amount of ingenuity in a sort of weed-

ing process of her lodgers, announcing her intention of receiving henceforward none but people who were in every way select. If a stranger presented himself, she let him know that M. Goriot, one of the best known and most highly-respected merchants in Paris, had singled out her boarding-house for a residence. She drew up a prospectus headed MAISON VAUQUER, in which it was asserted that hers was "*one of the oldest and most highly recommended boarding-houses in the Latin Quarter.*" "From the windows of the house," thus ran the prospectus, "there is a charming view of the Vallée des Gobelins (so there is—from the third floor), and a *beautiful garden, extending down to an avenue of lindens at the further end.*" Mention was made of the bracing air of the place and its quiet situation.

It was this prospectus that attracted Mme. la Comtesse de l'Ambermesnil, a widow of six-and-thirty, who was awaiting the final settlement of her husband's affairs, and of another matter regarding a pension due to her as the wife of a general who had died "*on the field of battle.*" On this Mme. Vauquer saw to her table, lighted a fire daily in the sitting-room for nearly six months, and kept the promise of her prospectus, even going to some expense to do so. And the Countess, on her side, addressed Mme. Vauquer as "my dear," and promised her two more boarders, the Baronne de Vaumerland and the widow of a colonel, the late Comte de Picquoisie, who were about to leave a boarding-house in the Marais, where the terms were higher than at the Maison Vauquer. Both these ladies, moreover, would be very well to do when the people at the War Office had come to an end of their formalities. "But Government departments are always so dilatory," the lady added.

After dinner the two widows went together up to Mme. Vauquer's room, and had a snug little chat over some cordial and various delicacies reserved for the mistress of the house. Mme. Vauquer's ideas as to Goriot were cordially approved by Mme. de l'Ambermesnil; it was a capital notion, which for that matter she had guessed from the very first; in her opin-

ion the vermicelli maker was an excellent man. "Ah! my dear lady, such a well-preserved man of his age, as sound as my eyesight—a man who might make a woman happy!" said the widow.

The good-natured Countess turned to the subject of Mme. Vauquer's dress, which was not in harmony with her projects. "You must put yourself on a war footing," said she.

After much serious consideration the two widows went shopping together—they purchased a hat adorned with ostrich feathers and a cap at the Palais Royal, and the Countess took her friend to the Magasin de la Petite Jeannette, where they chose a dress and a scarf. Thus equipped for the campaign, the widow looked exactly like the prize animal hung out for a sign above an à la mode beef shop; but she herself was so much pleased with the improvement, as she considered it, in her appearance, that she felt that she lay under some obligation to the Countess; and, though by no means open-handed, she begged that lady to accept a hat that cost twenty francs. The fact was that she needed the Countess's services on the delicate mission of sounding Goriot; the Countess must sing her praises in his ears. Mme. de l'Ambermesnil lent herself very good-naturedly to this manœuvre, began her operations, and succeeded in obtaining a private interview; but the overtures that she made, with a view to securing him for herself, were received with embarrassment, not to say a repulse. She left him, revolted by his coarseness.

"My angel," said she to her dear friend, "you will make nothing of that man yonder. He is absurdly suspicious, and he is a mean curmudgeon, an idiot, a fool; you would never be happy with him."

After what had passed between M. Goriot and Mme. de l'Ambermesnil, the Countess would no longer live under the same roof. She left the next day, forgot to pay for six months' board, and left behind her her wardrobe, cast-off clothing to the value of five francs. Eagerly and persistently as Mme. Vauquer sought her quondam lodger, the

Comtesse de l'Ambermesnil was never heard of again in Paris. The widow often talked of this deplorable business, and regretted her own too confiding disposition. As a matter of fact, she was as suspicious as a cat; but she was like many other people, who cannot trust their own kin and put themselves at the mercy of the next chance-comer—an odd but common phenomenon, whose causes may readily be traced to the depths of the human heart.

Perhaps there are people who know that they have nothing more to look for from those with whom they live; they have shown the emptiness of their hearts to their housemates, and in their secret selves they are conscious that they are severely judged, and that they deserve to be judged severely; but still they feel an unconquerable craving for praises that they do not hear, or they are consumed by a desire to appear to possess, in the eyes of a new audience, the qualities which they have not, hoping to win the admiration or affection of strangers at the risk of forfeiting it again some day. Or, once more, there are other mercenary natures who never do a kindness to a friend or a relation simply because these have a claim upon them, while a service done to a stranger brings its reward to self-love. Such natures feel but little affection for those who are nearest to them; they keep their kindness for remoter circles of acquaintance, and show most to those who dwell on its utmost limits. Mme. Vauquer belonged to both these essentially mean, false, and execrable classes.

"If I had been here at the time," Vautrin would say at the end of the story, "I would have shown her up, and that misfortune would not have befallen you. I know that kind of phiz!"

Like all narrow natures, Mme. Vauquer was wont to confine her attention to events, and did not go very deeply into the causes that brought them about; she likewise preferred to throw the blame of her own mistakes on other people, so she chose to consider that the honest vermicelli maker was responsible for her misfortune. It had opened her eyes, so she said, with regard to him. As soon as she

saw that her blandishments were in vain, and that her outlay on her toilet was money thrown away, she was not slow to discover the reason of his indifference. It became plain to her at once that there was *some other attraction*, to use her own expression. In short, it was evident that the hope she had so fondly cherished was a baseless delusion, and that she would "never make anything out of that man yonder," in the Countess's forcible phrase. The Countess seemed to have been a judge of character. Mme. Vauquer's aversion was naturally more energetic than her friendship, for her hatred was not in proportion to her love, but to her disappointed expectations. The human heart may find here and there a resting-place short of the highest height of affection, but we seldom stop in the steep, downward slope of hatred. Still, M. Goriot was a lodger, and the widow's wounded self-love could not vent itself in an explosion of wrath; like a monk harassed by the prior of his convent, she was forced to stifle her sighs of disappointment, and to gulp down her craving for revenge. Little minds find gratification for their feelings, benevolent or otherwise, by a constant exercise of petty ingenuity. The widow employed her woman's malice to devise a system of covert persecution. She began by a course of retrenchment—various luxuries which had found their way to the table appeared there no more.

"No more gherkins, no more anchovies; they have made a fool of me!" she said to Sylvie one morning, and they returned to the old bill of fare.

The thrifty frugality necessary to those who mean to make their way in the world had become an inveterate habit of life with M. Goriot. Soup, boiled beef, and a dish of vegetables had been, and always would be, the dinner he liked best, so Mme. Vauquer found it very difficult to annoy a boarder whose tastes were so simple. He was proof against her malice, and in desperation she spoke to him and of him slightly before the other lodgers, who began to amuse themselves at his expense, and so gratified her desire for revenge.

Toward the end of the first year the widow's suspicions had reached such a pitch that she began to wonder how it was that a retired merchant with a secure income of seven or eight thousand livres, the owner of such magnificent plate and jewelry handsome enough for a kept mistress, should be living in her house. Why should he devote so small a proportion of his money to his expenses? Until the first year was nearly at an end, Goriot had dined out once or twice every week, but these occasions came less frequently, and at last he was scarcely absent from the dinner table twice a month. It was hardly to be expected that Mme. Vauquer should regard the increased regularity of her boarder's habits with complacency, when those little excursions of his had been so much to her interest. She attributed the change not so much to a gradual diminution of fortune as to a spiteful wish to annoy his hostess. It is one of the most detestable habits of a Lilliputian mind to credit other people with its own malignant pettiness.

Unluckily, toward the end of the second year, M. Goriot's conduct gave some color to the idle talk about him. He asked Mme. Vauquer to give him a room on the second floor, and to make a corresponding reduction in her charges. Apparently, such strict economy was called for that he did without a fire all through the winter. Mme. Vauquer asked to be paid in advance, an arrangement to which M. Goriot consented, and thenceforward she spoke of him as "old Goriot."

What had brought about this decline and fall? Conjecture was keen, but investigation was difficult. Old Goriot was not communicative; in the sham countess's phrase, he was "a curmudgeon." Empty-headed people who babble about their own affairs because they have nothing else to occupy them, naturally conclude that if people say nothing of their doings it is because their doings will not bear being talked about; so the highly respectable merchant became a scoundrel, and the late beau was an old rogue. Opinion fluctuated. Sometimes, according to Vautrin, who came about this time to live in the Maison Vauquer, old Goriot

was a man who went on 'Change and *dabbled* (to use the sufficiently expressive language of the Stock Exchange) in stocks and shares after he had ruined himself by heavy speculation. Sometimes it was held that he was one of those petty gamblers who nightly play for small stakes until they win a few francs. A theory that he was a detective in the employ of the Home Office found favor at one time, but Vautrin urged that "Goriot was not sharp enough for one of that sort." There were yet other solutions; old Goriot was a skinflint, a shark of a money-lender, a man who lived by selling lottery tickets. He was by turns all the most mysterious brood of vice and shame and misery; yet, however vile his life might be, the feeling of repulsion which he aroused in others was not so strong that he must be banished from their society—he paid his way. Besides, Goriot had his uses, every one vented his spleen or sharpened his wit on him; he was pelted with jokes and belabored with hard words. The general consensus of opinion was in favor of a theory which seemed the most likely; this was Mme. Vauquer's view. According to her, the man so well preserved at his time of life, as sound as her eyesight, with whom a woman might be very happy, was a libertine who had strange tastes. These are the facts upon which Mme. Vauquer's slanders were based.

Early one morning, some few months after the departure of the unlucky Countess who had managed to live for six months at the widow's expense, Mme. Vauquer (not yet dressed) heard the rustle of a silk dress and a young woman's light footstep on the stair; some one was going to Goriot's room. He seemed to expect the visit, for his door stood ajar. The portly Sylvie presently came up to tell her mistress that a girl too pretty to be honest, "dressed like a goddess," and not a speck of mud on her laced cashmere boots, had glided in from the street like a snake, had found the kitchen, and asked for M. Goriot's room. Mme. Vauquer and the cook, listening, overheard several words affectionately spoken during the visit, which lasted for some time. When M. Goriot went downstairs with the lady, the stout

Sylvie forthwith took her basket and followed the lover-like couple, under pretext of going to do her marketing.

"M. Goriot must be awfully rich, all the same, madame," she reported on her return, "to keep her in such style. Just imagine! There was a splendid carriage waiting at the corner of the Place de l'Estrapade, and *she* got into it."

While they were at dinner that evening, Mme. Vauquer went to the window and drew the curtain, as the sun was shining into Goriot's eyes.

"You are beloved of fair ladies, M. Goriot—the sun seeks you out," she said, alluding to his visitor. "*Peste!* you have good taste; she was very pretty."

"That was my daughter," he said, with a kind of pride in his voice, and the rest chose to consider this as the fatuity of an old man who wishes to save appearances.

A month after this visit M. Goriot received another. The same daughter who had come to see him that morning came again after dinner, this time in evening dress. The boarders, in deep discussion in the dining-room, caught a glimpse of a lovely, fair-haired woman, slender, graceful, and much too distinguished-looking to be a daughter of old Goriot's.

"Two of them!" cried the portly Sylvie, who did not recognize the lady of the first visit.

A few days later, and another young lady—a tall, well-molded brunette, with dark hair and bright eyes—came to ask for M. Goriot.

"Three of them!" said Sylvie.

Then the second daughter, who had first come in the morning to see her father, came shortly afterward in the evening. She wore a ball-dress, and came in a carriage.

"Four of them!" commented Mme. Vauquer and her plump handmaid. Sylvie saw not a trace of resemblance between this great lady and the girl in her simple morning dress who had entered her kitchen on the occasion of her first visit.

At that time Goriot was paying twelve hundred francs a year to his landlady, and Mme. Vauquer saw nothing out

of the common in the fact that a rich man had four or five mistresses; nay, she thought it very knowing of him to pass them off as his daughters. She was not at all inclined to draw a hard-and-fast line, or to take umbrage at his sending for them to the *Maison Vauquer*; yet, inasmuch as these visits explained her boarder's indifference to her, she went so far (at the end of the second year) as to speak of him as an "ugly old wretch." When at length her boarder declined to nine hundred francs a year, she asked him very insolently what he took her house to be, after meeting one of these ladies on the stairs. Old Goriot answered that the lady was his elder daughter.

"So you have two or three dozen daughters, have you?" said Mme. Vauquer sharply.

"I have only two," her boarder answered, meekly, like a ruined man who is broken in to all the cruel usage of misfortune.

Toward the end of the third year old Goriot reduced his expenses still further; he went up to the third story, and now paid forty-five francs a month. He did without snuff, told his hairdresser that he no longer required his services, and gave up wearing powder. When Goriot appeared for the first time in this condition, an exclamation of astonishment broke from his hostess at the color of his hair—a dingy olive gray. He had grown sadder day by day under the influence of some hidden trouble; among all the faces round the table, his was the most woe-begone. There was no longer any doubt. Goriot was an elderly libertine, whose eyes had only been preserved by the skill of the physician from the malign influence of the remedies necessitated by the state of his health. The disgusting color of his hair was a result of his excesses and of the drugs which he had taken that he might continue his career. The poor old man's mental and physical condition afforded some grounds for the absurd rubbish talked about him. When his outfit was worn out, he replaced the fine linen by calico at four-

teen *sous* the ell. His diamonds, his gold snuff-box, watch-chain and trinkets, disappeared one by one. He had left off wearing the cornflower blue coat, and was sumptuously arrayed, summer as winter, in a coarse chestnut-brown coat, a plush waistcoat, and doeskin breeches. He grew thinner and thinner; his legs were shrunken, his cheeks, once so puffed out by contented bourgeois prosperity, were covered with wrinkles, and the outlines of the jawbones were distinctly visible; there were deep furrows in his forehead. In the fourth year of his residence in the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève he was no longer like his former self. The hale vermicelli manufacturer, sixty-two years of age, who had looked scarce forty, the stout, comfortable, prosperous tradesman, with an almost bucolic air, and such a brisk demeanor that it did you good to look at him; the man with something boyish in his smile, had suddenly sunk into his dotage, and had become a feeble, vacillating septuagenarian.

The keen, bright blue eyes had grown dull, and faded to a steel-gray color; the red inflamed rims looked as though they had shed tears of blood. He excited feelings of repulsion in some, and of pity in others. The young medical students who came to the house noticed the drooping of his lower lip and the conformation of the facial angle; and, after teasing him for some time to no purpose, they declared that *crétinism* was setting in.

One evening after dinner Mme. Vauquer said half banteringly to him, "So those daughters of yours don't come to see you any more, eh?" meaning to imply her doubts as to his paternity; but old Goriot shrank as if his hostess had touched him with a sword point.

"They come sometimes," he said in a tremulous voice.

"Aha! you still see them sometimes?" cried the students. "Bravo, Father Goriot!"

The old man scarcely seemed to hear the witticisms at his expense that followed on the words; he had relapsed into the dreamy state of mind that these superficial ob-

servers took for senile torpor, due to his lack of intelligence. If they had only known, they might have been deeply interested by the problem of his condition; but few problems were more obscure. It was easy, of course, to find out whether Goriot had really been a vermicelli manufacturer; the amount of his fortune was readily discoverable; but the old people, who were most inquisitive as to his concerns, never went beyond the limits of the Quarter, and lived in the lodging-house much as oysters cling to a rock. As for the rest, the current of life in Paris daily awaited them, and swept them away with it; so soon as they left the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève, they forgot the existence of the old man, their butt at dinner. For those narrow souls, or for careless youth, the misery in old Goriot's withered face and its dull apathy were quite incompatible with wealth or any sort of intelligence. As for the creatures whom he called his daughters, all Mme. Vauquer's boarders were of her opinion. With the faculty for severe logic sedulously cultivated by elderly women during long evenings of gossip till they can always find a hypothesis to fit all circumstances, she was wont to reason thus:

"If old Goriot had daughters of his own as rich as those ladies who came here seemed to be, he would not be lodging in my house, on the third floor, at forty-five francs a month; and he would not go about dressed like a poor man."

No objection could be raised to these inferences. So by the end of the month of November, 1819, at the time when the curtain rises on this drama, every one in the house had come to have a very decided opinion as to the poor old man. He had never had either wife or daughter; excesses had reduced him to this sluggish condition; he was a sort of human mollusk who should be classed among the *capulidæ*, so said one of the dinner contingent, an employé at the Muséum, who had a pretty wit of his own. Poiret was an eagle, a gentleman, compared with Goriot. Poiret would join the talk, argue, answer when he was spoken to; as a matter of fact, his talk, arguments, and responses contrib-

uted nothing to the conversation, for Poiret had a habit of repeating what the others said in different words; still, he did join in the talk; he was alive, and seemed capable of feeling; while old Goriot (to quote the Muséum official again) was invariably at zero—Réaumur.

Eugène de Rastignac had just returned to Paris in a state of mind not unknown to young men who are conscious of unusual powers, and to those whose faculties are so stimulated by a difficult position that for the time being they rise above the ordinary level.

Rastignac's first year of study for the preliminary examinations in law had left him free to see the sights of Paris and to enjoy some of its amusements. A student has not much time on his hands if he sets himself to learn the repertory of every theatre, and to study the ins and outs of the labyrinth of Paris. To know its customs, to learn the language, and become familiar with the amusements of the capital, he must explore its recesses, good and bad, follow the studies that please him best, and form some idea of the treasures contained in galleries and museums.

At this stage of his career, a student grows eager and excited about all sorts of follies that seem to him to be of immense importance. He has his hero, his great man, a professor at the Collège de France, paid to talk down to the level of his audience. He adjusts his cravat, and strikes various attitudes for the benefit of the women in the first galleries at the Opéra-Comique. As he passes through all these successive initiations, and breaks out of his sheath, the horizons of life widen around him, and at length he grasps the plan of society with the different human strata of which it is composed.

If he begins by admiring the procession of carriages on sunny afternoons in the Champs-Élysées, he soon reaches the further stage of envying their owners. Unconsciously, Eugène had served his apprenticeship before he went back to Angoulême for the long vacation after taking his degrees as bachelor of arts and bachelor of law. The illusions of

childhood had vanished, so also had the ideas he brought with him from the provinces; he had returned thither with an intelligence developed, with loftier ambitions, and saw things as they were at home in the old manor house. His father and mother, his two brothers and two sisters, with an aged aunt, whose whole fortune consisted in annuities, lived on the little estate of Rastignac. The whole property brought in about three thousand francs; and though the amount varied with the season (as must always be the case in a vine-growing district), they were obliged to spare an unvarying twelve hundred francs out of their income for him. He saw how constantly the poverty, which they had generously hidden from him, weighed upon them; he could not help comparing the sisters, who had seemed so beautiful to his boyish eyes, with women in Paris, who had realized the beauty of his dreams. The uncertain future of the whole family depended upon him. It did not escape his eyes that not a crumb was wasted in the house, nor that the wine they drank was made from the second pressing; a multitude of small things, which it is useless to speak of in detail here, made him burn to distinguish himself, and his ambition to succeed increased tenfold.

He meant, like all great souls, that his success should be owing entirely to his merits; but his was pre-eminently a southern temperament, the execution of his plans was sure to be marred by the vertigo that seizes on youth when youth sees itself alone in a wide sea, uncertain how to spend its energies, whither to steer its course, how to adapt its sails to the winds. At first he determined to fling himself heart and soul into his work, but he was diverted from this purpose by the need of society and connections; then he saw how great an influence women exert in social life, and suddenly made up his mind to go out into this world to seek a protectress there. Surely a clever and high-spirited young man, whose wit and courage were set off to advantage by a graceful figure, and the vigorous kind of beauty that readily strikes a woman's imagination, need not

despair of finding a protectress. These ideas occurred to him in his country walks with his sisters, whom he had once joined so gayly. The girls thought him very much changed.

His aunt, Mme. de Marcillac, had been presented at court, and had moved among the highest heights of that lofty region. Suddenly the young man's ambition discerned in those recollections of hers, which had been like nursery fairy tales to her nephews and nieces, the elements of a social success at least as important as the success which he had achieved at the *Ecole de Droit*. He began to ask his aunt about those relations; some of the old ties might still hold good. After much shaking of the branches of the family tree, the old lady came to the conclusion that of all persons who could be useful to her nephew among the selfish genus of rich relations, the Vicomtesse de Beauséant was the least likely to refuse. To this lady, therefore, she wrote in the old-fashioned style, recommending Eugène to her; pointing out to her nephew that, if he succeeded in pleasing Mme. de Beauséant, the Vicomtesse would introduce him to other relations. A few days after his return to Paris, therefore, Rastignac sent his aunt's letter to Mme. de Beauséant. The Vicomtesse replied by an invitation to a ball for the following evening. This was the position of affairs at the *Maison Vauquer* at the end of November, 1819.

A few days later, after Mme. de Beauséant's ball, Eugène came in at two o'clock in the morning. The persevering student meant to make up for the lost time by working until daylight. It was the first time that he had attempted to spend the night in this way in that silent quarter. The spell of a factitious energy was upon him; he had beheld the pomp and splendor of the world. He had not dined at the *Maison Vauquer*; the boarders probably would think that he would walk home at daybreak from the dance, as he had done sometimes on former occasions, after a fête at the Prado, or a ball at the Odéon, splashing his silk stockings thereby, and ruining his pumps.

It so happened that Christophe took a look into the street before drawing the bolts of the door; and Rastignac, coming in at that moment, could go up to his room without making any noise, followed by Christophe, who made a great deal. Eugène exchanged his dress suit for a shabby overcoat and slippers, kindled a fire with some blocks of patent fuel, and prepared for his night's work in such a sort that the faint sounds he made were drowned by Christophe's heavy tramp on the stairs.

Eugène sat absorbed in thought for a few moments before plunging into his law books. He had just become aware of the fact that the Vicomtesse de Beauséant was one of the queens of fashion, that her house was thought to be the pleasantest in the Faubourg Saint-Germain. And not only so, she was, by right of her fortune, and the name she bore, one of the most conspicuous figures in that aristocratic world. Thanks to his aunt, thanks to Mme. de Marcillac's letter of introduction, the poor student had been kindly received in that house before he knew the extent of the favor thus shown to him. It was almost like a patent of nobility to be admitted to those gilded salons: he had appeared in the most exclusive circle in Paris, and now all doors were open for him. Eugène had been dazzled at first by the brilliant assembly, and had scarcely exchanged a few words with the Vicomtesse; he had been content to single out a goddess from among this throng of Parisian divinities, one of those women who are sure to attract a young man's fancy.

The Comtesse Anastasie de Restaud was tall and gracefully made; she had one of the prettiest figures in Paris. Imagine a pair of great dark eyes, a magnificently molded hand, a shapely foot. There was a fiery energy in her movements; the Marquis de Ronquerolles had called her a "thoroughbred," but this fineness of nervous organization had brought no accompanying defect; the outlines of her form were full and rounded, without any tendency to stoutness. "A thoroughbred," "a pure pedigree," these figures of speech have replaced the "heavenly angel" and Ossianic

nomenclature; the old mythology of love is extinct, doomed to perish by modern dandyism. But for Rastignac, Mme. Anastasie de Restaud was the woman for whom he had sighed. He had contrived to write his name twice upon the list of partners upon her fan, and had snatched a few words with her during the first quadrille.

"Where shall I meet you again, madame?" he asked abruptly, and the tones of his voice were full of the vehement energy that women like so well.

"Oh, everywhere!" said she, "in the Bois, at the Bouffons, in my own house."

With the impetuosity of his adventurous southern temper, he did all he could to cultivate an acquaintance with this lovely countess, making the best of his opportunities in the quadrille and during a waltz that she gave him. When he had told her that he was a cousin of Mme. de Beauséant's, the Countess, whom he took for a great lady, asked him to call at her house, and after her parting smile, Rastignac felt convinced that he must make this visit. He was so lucky as to light upon some one who did not laugh at his ignorance, a fatal defect among the gilded and insolent youth of that period; the coterie of Maulincourts, Maximes de Trailles, de Marsays, Ronquerolles, Ajuda-Pintos, and Vandenesses who shone there in all the glory of coxcombry among the best-dressed women of fashion in Paris—Lady Brandon, the Duchesse de Langeais, the Comtesse de Kergarouët, Mme. de Sérizy, the Duchesse de Carigliano, the Comtesse Ferraud, Mme. de Lanty, the Marquise d'Aiglemont, Mme. Firmiani, the Marquise de Listomère and the Marquise d'Espard, the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse and the Grandlieus. Luckily, therefore, for him, the novice happened upon the Marquis de Montriveau, the lover of the Duchesse de Langeais, a general as simple as a child; from him Rastignac learned that the Comtesse lived in the Rue du Helder.

Ah, what it is to be young, eager to see the world, greedily on the watch for any chance that brings you nearer the woman of your dreams, and behold two houses open their doors to

you! To set foot in the Vicomtesse de Beauséant's house in the Faubourg Saint-Germain; to fall on your knees before a Comtesse de Restaud in the Chaussée d'Antin; to look at one glance across a vista of Paris drawing-rooms, conscious that, possessing sufficient good looks, you may hope to find aid and protection there in a feminine heart! To feel ambitious enough to spurn the tight-rope on which you must walk with the steady head of an acrobat for whom a fall is impossible, and to find in a charming woman the best of all balancing poles.

He sat there with his thoughts for a while, Law on the one hand, and Poverty on the other, beholding a radiant vision of a woman rise above the dull, smouldering fire. Who would not have paused and questioned the future as Eugène was doing? who would not have pictured it full of success? His wandering thoughts took wings; he was transported out of the present into that blissful future; he was sitting by Mme. de Restaud's side, when a sort of sigh, like the grunt of an overburdened St. Joseph, broke the silence of the night. It vibrated through the student, who took the sound for a death-groan. He opened his door noiselessly, went out upon the landing, and saw a thin streak of light under old Goriot's door. Eugène feared that his neighbor had been taken ill; he went over and looked through the keyhole; the old man was busily engaged in an occupation so singular and so suspicious that Rastignac thought he was only doing a piece of necessary service to society to watch the self-styled vermicelli maker's nocturnal industries.

The table was upturned, and Goriot had doubtless in some way secured a silver plate and cup to the bar before knotting a thick rope round them; he was pulling at this rope with such enormous force that they were being crushed and twisted out of shape; to all appearance he meant to convert the richly wrought metal into ingots.

"*Peste!* what a man!" said Rastignac, as he watched Goriot's muscular arms; there was not a sound in the room while the old man, with the aid of the rope, was kneading the

silver like dough. "Was he then, indeed, a thief, or a receiver of stolen goods, who affected imbecility and decrepitude, and lived like a beggar that he might carry on his pursuits the more securely?" Eugène stood for a moment revolving these questions, then he looked again through the keyhole.

Old Goriot had unwound his coil of rope; he had covered the table with a blanket, and was now employed in rolling the flattened mass of silver into a bar, an operation which he performed with marvellous dexterity.

"Why, he must be as strong as Augustus, King of Poland!" said Eugène to himself when the bar was nearly finished.

Old Goriot looked sadly at his handiwork, tears fell from his eyes, he blew out the dip which had served him for a light while he manipulated the silver, and Eugène heard him sigh as he lay down again.

"He is mad," thought the student.

"*Poor child!*" old Goriot said aloud. Rastignac, hearing those words, concluded to keep silence; he would not hastily condemn his neighbor. He was just in the doorway of his room when a strange sound from the staircase below reached his ears; it might have been made by two men coming up in list slippers. Eugène listened; two men there certainly were, he could hear their breathing. Yet there had been no sound of opening the street door, no footsteps in the passage. Suddenly, too, he saw a faint gleam of light on the second story; it came from M. Vautrin's room.

"There are a good many mysteries here for a lodging-house!" he said to himself.

He went part of the way downstairs and listened again. The rattle of gold reached his ears. In another moment the light was put out, and again he distinctly heard the breathing of two men, but no sound of a door being opened or shut. The two men went downstairs, the faint sounds growing fainter as they went.

"Who is there?" cried Mme. Vauquer out of her bedroom window.

"I, Mme. Vauquer," answered Vautrin's deep bass voice. "I am coming in."

"That is odd! Christophe drew the bolts," said Eugène, going back to his room. "You have to sit up at night, it seems, if you really mean to know all that is going on about you in Paris."

These incidents turned his thought from his ambitious dreams; he betook himself to his work, but his thought wandered back to old Goriot's suspicious occupation; Mme. de Restaud's face swam again and again before his eyes like a vision of a brilliant future, and at last he lay down and slept with clinched fists. When a young man makes up his mind that he will work all night, the chances are that seven times out of ten he will sleep till morning. Such vigils do not begin before we are turned twenty.

The next morning Paris was wrapped in one of the dense fogs that throw the most punctual people out in their calculations as to the time; even the most business-like folk fail to keep their appointments in such weather, and ordinary mortals wake up at noon and fancy it is eight o'clock. On this morning it was half-past nine, and Mme. Vauquer still lay abed. Christophe was late, Sylvie was late, but the two sat comfortably taking their coffee as usual. It was Sylvie's custom to take the cream off the milk destined for the boarders' breakfast for her own, and to boil the remainder for some time, so that Madame should not discover this illegal exaction.

"Sylvie," said Christophe, as he dipped a piece of toast into the coffee, "M. Vautrin, who is not such a bad sort, all the same, had two people come to see him again last night. If Madame says anything, mind you say nothing about it."

"Has he given you something?"

"He gave me a five-franc piece this month, which is as good as saying, 'Hold your tongue.'"

"Except him and Mme. Couture, who don't look twice at every penny, there's no one in the house that doesn't try

to get back with the left hand all that they give with the right at New Year," said Sylvie.

"And, after all," said Christophe, "what do they give you? A miserable five-franc piece. There is old Goriot, who has cleaned his shoes himself these two years past. There is that old beggar Poiret, who goes without blacking altogether; he would sooner drink it than put it on his boots. Then there is that whipper-snapper of a student, who gives me a couple of francs. Two francs will not pay for my brushes, and he sells his old clothes, and gets more for them than they are worth. Oh! they're a shabby lot!"

"Pooh!" said Sylvie, sipping her coffee, "our places are the best in the Quarter, that I know. But about that great big chap Vautrin, Christophe; has any one told you anything about him?"

"Yes. I met a gentleman in the street a few days ago; he said to me, 'There's a gentleman at your place, isn't there? a tall man that dyes his whiskers?' I told him, 'No, sir; they aren't dyed. A gay fellow like him hasn't the time to do it.' And when I told M. Vautrin about it afterward, he said, 'Quite right, my boy. That is the way to answer them. There is nothing more unpleasant than to have your little weaknesses known; it might spoil many a match.'"

"Well, and for my part," said Sylvie, "a man tried to humbug me at the market wanting to know if I had seen him put on his shirt. Such bosh! There," she cried, interrupting herself, "that's a quarter to ten striking at the Val-de-Grâce, and not a soul stirring!"

"Pooh! they are all gone out. Mme. Couture and the girl went out at eight o'clock to take the wafer at Saint-Etienne. Old Goriot started off somewhere with a parcel, and the student won't be back from his lecture till ten o'clock. I saw them go while I was sweeping the stairs; old Goriot knocked up against me, and his parcel was as hard as iron. What is the old fellow up to, I wonder? He is as good as a plaything for the rest of them; they can never

let him alone; but he is a good man, all the same, and worth more than all of them put together. He doesn't give you much himself, but he sometimes sends you with a message to ladies who fork out famous tips; they are dressed grandly, too."

"His daughters, as he calls them, eh? There are a dozen of them."

"I have never been to more than two—the two who came here."

"There is Madame moving overhead; I shall have to go, or she will raise a fine racket. Just keep an eye on the milk, Christophe; don't let the cat get at it."

Sylvie went up to her mistress's room.

"Sylvie! How is this? It's nearly ten o'clock, and you let me sleep on like a dormouse. Such a thing has never happened before."

"It's the fog; it is that thick, you could cut it with a knife."

"But how about breakfast?"

"Bah! the boarders are possessed, I'm sure. They all cleared out before there was a wink of daylight."

"Do speak properly, Sylvie," Mme. Vauquer retorted; "say a blink of daylight."

"Ah, well, madame, whichever you please. Anyhow, you can have breakfast at ten o'clock. La Michonnette and Poireau have neither of them stirred. There are only those two upstairs, and they are sleeping like the logs they are."

"But, Sylvie, you put their names together as if—"

"As if what?" said Sylvie, bursting into a guffaw. "The two of them make a pair."

"It is a strange thing, isn't it, Sylvie, how M. Vautrin got in last night after Christophe had bolted the door?"

"Not at all, madame. Christophe heard M. Vautrin, and went down and undid the door for him. And here are you imagining that—"

"Give me my bodice, and be quick and get breakfast ready. Dish up the rest of the mutton with the potatoes,

and you can put the stewed pears on the table, those at five a penny."

A few moments later Mme. Vauquer came down, just in time to see the cat knock down a plate that covered a bowl of milk, and begin to lap in all haste.

"Mistigris!" she cried.

The cat fled, but promptly returned to rub against her ankles.

"Oh! yes, you can wheedle, you old hypocrite!" she said. "Sylvie! Sylvie!"

"Yes, madame; what is it?"

"Just see what the cat has done!"

"It is all that stupid Christophe's fault. I told him to stop and lay the table. What has become of him? Don't you worry, madame; old Goriot shall have it. I will fill it up with water, and he won't know the difference; he never notices anything, not even what he eats."

"I wonder where the old heathen can have gone?" said Mme. Vauquer, setting the plates round the table.

"Who knows? He is up to all sorts of tricks."

"I have overslept myself," said Mme. Vauquer.

"But Madame looks as fresh as a rose, all the same."

The door bell rang at that moment, and Vautrin came through the sitting-room, singing loudly—

"'Tis the same old story everywhere,
A roving heart and a roving glance . . ."

"Oh! Mamma Vauquer! good-morning!" he cried at the sight of his hostess, and he put his arm gayly round her waist.

"There! have done—"

"'Impertinence!' Say it!" he answered. "Come, say it! Now isn't that what you really mean? Stop a bit, I will help you to set the table. Ah! I am a nice man, am I not?"

"For the locks of brown and the golden hair
A sighing lover . . ."

"Oh! I have just seen something so funny—

"... led by chance."

"What?" asked the widow.

"Old Goriot in the goldsmith's shop in the Rue Dauphine at half-past eight this morning. They buy old spoons and forks and gold lace there, and Goriot sold a piece of silver plate for a good round sum. It had been twisted out of shape very neatly for a man that's not used to the trade."

"Really? You don't say so?"

"Yes. One of my friends is expatriating himself; I had been to see him off on board the Royal Mail steamer, and was coming back here. I waited after that to see what old Goriot would do; it is a comical affair. He came back to this quarter of the world, to the Rue des Grès, and went into a money-lender's house; everybody knows him, Gobseck, a stuck-up rascal, that would make dominoes out of his father's bones; a Turk, a heathen, an old Jew, a Greek; it would be a difficult matter to rob *him*, for he puts all his coin into the Bank."

"Then what was old Goriot doing there?"

"Doing?" said Vautrin. "Nothing; he was bent on his own undoing. He is a simpleton, stupid enough to ruin himself by running after—"

"There he is!" said Sylvie.

"Christophe," cried old Goriot's voice, "come upstairs with me."

Christophe went up, and shortly afterward came down again.

"Where are you going?" Mme. Vauquer asked of her servant.

"Out on an errand for M. Goriot."

"What may that be?" said Vautrin, pouncing on a letter in Christophe's hand. "'Mme. la Comtesse Anastasie de Restaud,'" he read. "Where are you going with it?" he added, as he gave the letter back to Christophe.

"To the Rue du Helder. I have orders to give this into her hands myself."

"What is there inside it?" said Vautrin, holding the letter up to the light. "A banknote? No." He peered into the envelope. "A receipted account!" he cried. "My word! 'tis a gallant old dotard. Off with you, old chap," he said, bringing down a hand on Christophe's head, and spinning the man round like a thimble; "you will have a famous tip."

By this time the table was set. Sylvie was boiling the milk, Mme. Vauquer was lighting a fire in the stove with some assistance from Vautrin, who kept on humming to himself—

"The same old story everywhere,
A roving heart and a roving glance."

When everything was ready, Mme. Couture and Mlle. Taillefer came in.

"Where have you been this morning, fair lady?" said Mme. Vauquer, turning to Mme. Couture.

"We have just been to say our prayers at Saint-Etienne du Mont. To-day is the day when we must go to see M. Taillefer. Poor little thing! She is trembling like a leaf," Mme. Couture went on, as she seated herself before the fire and held the steaming soles of her boots to the blaze.

"Warm yourself, Victorine," said Mme. Vauquer.

"It is quite right and proper, mademoiselle, to pray to Heaven to soften your father's heart," said Vautrin, as he drew a chair nearer to the orphan girl; "but that is not enough. What you want is a friend who will give the monster a piece of his mind; a barbarian that has three millions (so they say), and will not give you a dowry; and a pretty girl needs a dowry nowadays."

"Poor child!" said Mme. Vauquer. "Never mind, my pet, your wretch of a father is going just the way to bring trouble upon himself."

Victorine's eyes filled with tears at the words, and the widow checked herself at a sign from Mme. Couture.

"If we could only see him!" said the Commissary-General's widow; "if I could speak to him myself and

give him his wife's last letter! I have never dared to run the risk of sending it by post; he knew my handwriting—"

"'Oh, woman, persecuted and injured innocent!'" exclaimed Vautrin, breaking in upon her. "So that is how you are, is it? In a few days' time I will look into your affairs, and it will be all right, you shall see."

"Oh! sir," said Victorine, with a tearful but eager glance at Vautrin, who showed no sign of being touched by it, "if you know of any way of communicating with my father, please be sure and tell him that his affection and my mother's honor are more to me than all the money in the world. If you can induce him to relent a little toward me, I will pray to God for you. You may be sure of my gratitude—"

"The same old story everywhere," sang Vautrin, with a satirical intonation. At this juncture, Goriot, Mlle. Michonneau, and Poiret came downstairs together; possibly the scent of the gravy which Sylvie was making to serve with the mutton had announced breakfast. The seven people thus assembled bade each other good-morning, and took their places at the table; the clock struck ten, and the student's footstep was heard outside.

"Ah! here you are, M. Eugène," said Sylvie; "every one is breakfasting at home to-day."

The student exchanged greetings with the lodgers, and sat down beside Goriot.

"I have just met with a queer adventure," he said, as he helped himself abundantly to the mutton, and cut a slice of bread, which Mme. Vauquer's eyes gauged as usual.

"An adventure?" queried Poiret.

"Well, and what is there to astonish you in that, old boy?" Vautrin asked of Poiret. "M. Eugène is cut out for that kind of thing."

Mlle. Taillefer stole a timid glance at the young student.

"Tell us about your adventure?" demanded M. Vauquer.

"Yesterday evening I went to a ball given by a cousin of mine, the Vicomtesse de Beauséant. She has a magnifi-

cent house; the rooms were hung with silk—in short, it was a splendid affair, and I was as happy as a king—”

“Fisher,” put in Vautrin, interrupting.

“What do you mean, sir?” said Eugène sharply.

“I said ‘fisher,’ because kingfishers see a good deal more fun than kings.”

“Quite true; I would much rather be the little careless bird than a king,” said Poiret the ditto-ist, “because—”

“In fact”—the law-student cut him short—“I danced with one of the handsomest women in the room, a charming countess, the most exquisite creature I have ever seen. There was peach blossom in her hair, and she had the loveliest bouquet of flowers—real flowers, that scented the air—but there! it is no use trying to describe a woman glowing with the dance. You ought to have seen her! Well, and this morning I met this divine countess about nine o’clock, on foot in the Rue des Grès. Oh! how my heart beat! I began to think—”

“That she was coming here,” said Vautrin, with a keen look at the student. “I expect that she was going to call on old Gobseck, a money-lender. If ever you explore a Parisian woman’s heart, you will find the money-lender first, and the lover afterward. Your countess is called Anastasie de Restaud, and she lives in the Rue du Helder.”

The student stared hard at Vautrin. Old Goriot raised his head at the words, and gave the two speakers a glance so full of intelligence and uneasiness that the lodgers beheld him with astonishment.

“Then Christophe was too late, and she must have gone to him!” cried Goriot, with anguish in his voice.

“It is just as I guessed,” said Vautrin, leaning over to whisper in Mme. Vauquer’s ear.

Goriot went on with his breakfast, but seemed unconscious of what he was doing. He had never looked more stupid nor more taken up with his own thoughts than he did at that moment.

“Who the devil could have told you her name, M. Vautrin?” asked Eugène.

"Aha! there you are!" answered Vautrin. "Old Father Goriot there knew it quite well! and why should not I know it too?"

"M. Goriot?" the student cried.

"What is it?" said the old man. "So she was very beautiful, was she, yesterday night?"

"Who?"

"Mme. de Restaud."

"Look at the old wretch," said Mme. Vauquer, speaking to Vautrin; "how his eyes light up!"

"Then does he really keep her?" said Mlle. Michonneau, in a whisper to the student.

"Oh! yes, she was tremendously pretty," Eugène answered. Old Goriot watched him with eager eyes. "If Mme. de Beauséant had not been there, my divine countess would have been the queen of the ball; none of the younger men had eyes for any one else. I was the twelfth on her list, and she danced every quadrille. The other women were furious. She must have enjoyed herself, if ever creature did! It is a true saying that there is no more beautiful sight than a frigate in full sail, a galloping horse, or a woman dancing."

"So the wheel turns," said Vautrin; "yesterday night at a duchess's ball, this morning in a money-lender's office, on the lowest rung of the ladder—just like a Parisienne! If their husbands cannot afford to pay for their frantic extravagance, they will sell themselves. Or if they cannot do that, they will tear out their mothers' hearts to find something to pay for their splendor. They will turn the world upside down. Just a Parisienne through and through!"

Old Goriot's face, which had shone at the student's words like the sun on a bright day, clouded over all at once at this cruel speech of Vautrin's.

"Well," said Mme. Vauquer, "but where is your adventure? Did you speak to her? Did you ask her if she wanted to study law?"

"She did not see me," said Eugène. "But only think of meeting one of the prettiest women in Paris in the Rue

des Grès at nine o'clock! She could not have reached home after the ball till two o'clock this morning. Wasn't it queer? There is no place like Paris for these sort of adventures."

"Pshaw! much funnier things than *that* happen here!" exclaimed Vautrin.

Mlle. Taillefer had scarcely heeded the talk, she was so absorbed by the thought of the new attempt that she was about to make. Mme. Couture made a sign that it was time to go upstairs and dress; the two ladies went out, and old Goriot followed their example.

"Well, did you see?" said Mme. Vauquer, addressing Vautrin and the rest of the circle. "He is ruining himself for those women, that is plain."

"Nothing will ever make me believe that that beautiful Comtesse de Restaud is anything to old Goriot," cried the student.

"Well, and if you don't," broke in Vautrin, "we are not set on convincing you. You are too young to know Paris thoroughly yet; later on you will find out that there are what we call men with a passion—"

Mlle. Michonneau gave Vautrin a quick glance at these words. They seemed to be like the sound of a trumpet to a trooper's horse. "Aha!" said Vautrin, stopping in his speech to give her a searching glance, "so we have had our little experiences, have we?"

The old maid lowered her eyes like a nun who sees a statue.

"Well," he went on, "when folk of that kind get a notion into their heads, they cannot drop it. They must drink the water from some particular spring—it is stagnant as often as not; but they will sell their wives and families, they will sell their own souls to the devil to get it. For some this spring is play, or the stock-exchange, or music, or a collection of pictures or insects; for others it is some woman who can give them the dainties they like. You might offer these last all the women on earth—they would turn up their noses; they will have the only one

who can gratify their passion. It often happens that the woman does not care for them at all, and treats them cruelly; they buy their morsels of satisfaction very dear; but no matter, the fools are never tired of it; they will take their last blanket to the pawnbroker's to give their last five-franc piece to her. Old Goriot here is one of that sort. He is discreet, so the Countess exploits him—just the way of the gay world. The poor old fellow thinks of her and of nothing else. In all other respects you see he is a stupid animal; but get him on that subject, and his eyes sparkle like diamonds. That secret is not difficult to guess. He took some plate himself this morning to the melting-pot, and I saw him at Daddy Gobseck's in the Rue des Grès. And now, mark what follows—he came back here, and gave a letter for the Comtesse de Restaud to that noodle of a Christophe, who showed us the address; there was a receipted bill inside it. It is clear that it was an urgent matter if the Countess also went herself to the old money-lender. Old Goriot has financed her handsomely. There is no need to tack a tale together; the thing is self-evident. So that shows you, sir student, that all the time your Countess was smiling, dancing, flirting, swaying her peach-flower crowned head, with her gown gathered into her hand, her slippers were pinching her, as they say; she was thinking of her protested bills, or her lover's protested bills."

"You have made me wild to know the truth," cried Eugène; "I will go to call on Mme. de Restaud to-morrow."

"Yes," echoed Poiret; "you must go and call on Mme. de Restaud."

"And perhaps you will find old Goriot there, who will take payment for the assistance he politely rendered."

Eugène looked disgusted. "Why, then, this Paris of yours is a slough."

"And an uncommonly queer slough, too," replied Vautrin. "The mud splashes you as you drive through it in your carriage—you are a respectable person; you go afoot and are splashed—you are a scoundrel. You are so un-

lucky as to walk off with something or other belonging to somebody else, and they exhibit you as a curiosity in the Place du Palais-de-Justice; you steal a million, and you are pointed out in every salon as a model of virtue. And you pay thirty millions for the police and the courts of justice, for the maintenance of law and order! A pretty state of things it is!"

"What," cried Mme. Vauquer, "has old Goriot really melted down his silver posset-dish?"

"There were two turtle-doves on the lid, were there not?" asked Eugène.

"Yes, that there were."

"Then, was he fond of it?" said Eugène. "He cried while he was breaking up the cup and plate. I happened to see him by accident."

"It was dear to him as his own life," answered the widow.

"There! you see how infatuated the old fellow is!" cried Vautrin. "The woman yonder can coax the soul out of him."

The student went up to his room. Vautrin went out, and a few minutes later Mme. Couture and Victorine drove away in a cab which Sylvie had called for them. Poiret gave his arm to Mlle. Michonneau, and they went together to spend the two sunniest hours of the day in the Jardin des Plantes.

"Well, those two are as good as married," was the portly Sylvie's comment. "They are going out together to-day for the first time. They are such a couple of dry sticks that if they happen to strike against each other they will draw sparks like flint and steel."

"Keep clear of Mlle. Michonneau's shawl, then," said Mme. Vauquer, laughing; "it would flare up like tinder."

At four o'clock that evening, when Goriot came in, he saw, by the light of two smoky lamps, that Victorine's eyes were red. Mme. Vauquer was listening to the history of

the visit made that morning to M. Taillefer; it had been made in vain. Taillefer was tired of the annual application made by his daughter and her elderly friend; he gave them a personal interview in order to arrive at an understanding with them.

"My dear lady," said Mme. Couture, addressing Mme. Vauquer, "just imagine it; he did not even ask Victorine to sit down, she was standing the whole time. He said to me quite coolly, without putting himself in a passion, that we might spare ourselves the trouble of going there; that the young lady (he would not call her his daughter) was injuring her cause by importuning him (*importuning!* once a year, the wretch!); that as Victorine's mother had nothing when he married her, Victorine ought not to expect anything from him; in fact, he said the most cruel things, that made the poor child burst out crying. The little thing threw herself at her father's feet and spoke up bravely; she said that she only persevered in her visits for her mother's sake; that she would obey him without a murmur, but that she begged him to read her poor dead mother's farewell letter. She took it up and gave it to him, saying the most beautiful things in the world, most beautifully expressed; I do not know where she learned them; God must have put them into her head, for the poor child was inspired to speak so nicely that it made me cry like a fool to hear her talk. And what do you think the monster was doing all the time? Cutting his nails! He took the letter that poor Mme. Taillefer had soaked with tears, and flung it on to the chimney-piece. 'That is all right,' he said. He held out his hands to raise his daughter, but she covered them with kisses, and he drew them away again. Scandalous, isn't it? And his great booby of a son came in and took no notice of his sister."

"What inhuman wretches they must be!" said old Goriot.

"And then they both went out of the room," Mme. Couture went on, without heeding the worthy vermicelli



MADAME VAUQUER

maker's exclamation; "father and son bowed to me, and asked me to excuse them on account of urgent business! That is the history of our call. Well, he has seen his daughter at any rate. How he can refuse to acknowledge her I cannot think, for they are as like as two peas."

The boarders dropped in one after another, interchanging greetings and the empty jokes that certain classes of Parisians regard as humorous and witty. Dulness is their prevailing ingredient, and the whole point consists in mispronouncing a word or in a gesture. This kind of argot is always changing. The essence of the jest consists in some catchword suggested by a political event, an incident in the police courts, a street song, or a bit of burlesque at some theatre, and forgotten in a month. Anything and everything serves to keep up a game of battledore and shuttlecock with words and ideas. The diorama, a recent invention, which carried an optical illusion a degree further than panoramas, had given rise to a mania among art students for ending every word with *rama*. The Maison Vauquer had caught the infection from a young artist among the boarders.

"Well, Monsieur-r-r Poirot," said the employé from the Museum, "how is your health-orama?" Then, without waiting for an answer, he turned to Mme. Couture and Victorine with a "Ladies, you seem melancholy."

"Is dinner ready?" cried Horace Bianchon, a medical student, and a friend of Rastignac's; "my stomach is sinking *usque ad talones*."

"There is an uncommon *frozerama* outside!" said Vautrin. "Make room there, Father Goriot! Confound it! your foot covers the whole front of the stove."

"Illustrious M. Vautrin," put in Bianchon, "why do you say *frozerama*? It is incorrect; it should be *frozen-rama*."

"No, it shouldn't," said the official from the Muséum; "*frozerama* is right by the same rule that you say 'My feet are *froze*.'"

"Ah! ah!"

"Here is his Excellency the Marquis de Rastignac, Doctor of the Law of Contraries," cried Bianchon, seizing Eugène by the throat, and almost throttling him.

"Hallo there! hallo!"

Mlle. Michonneau came noiselessly in, bowed to the rest of the party, and took her place beside the three women without saying a word.

"That old bat always makes me shudder," said Bianchon in a low voice, indicating Mlle. Michonneau to Vautrin. "I have studied Gall's system, and I am sure she has the bump of Judas."

"Then you have seen a case before?" said Vautrin.

"Who has not?" answered Bianchon. "Upon my word, that ghastly old maid looks just like one of the long worms that will gnaw a beam through, give them time enough."

"That is the way, young man," returned he of the forty years and the dyed whiskers:

"The rose has lived the life of a rose—
A morning's space."

"Aha! here is a magnificent *soupe-au-rama*," cried Poirot as Christophe came in bearing the soup with cautious heed.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Mme. Vauquer; "it is *soupe aux choux*."

All the young men roared with laughter.

"Had you there, Poirot!"

"Poir-r-r-rette! she had you there!"

"Score two points to Mamma Vauquer," said Vautrin.

"Did any one notice the fog this morning?" asked the official.

"It was a frantic fog," said Bianchon, "a fog unparalleled, doleful, melancholy, sea-green, asthmatical—a Goriot of a fog!"

"A Goriorama," said the art student, "because you couldn't see a thing in it."

"Hey! Milord Gâôriotte, they air talking about yoo-o-ou!"

Old Goriot, seated at the lower end of the table, close to the door through which the servant entered, raised his face; he had smelled at a scrap of bread that lay under his table napkin, an old trick acquired in his commercial capacity, that still showed itself at times.

"Well," Mme. Vauquer cried in sharp tones, that rang above the rattle of spoons and plates and the sound of other voices, "and is there anything the matter with the bread?"

"Nothing whatever, madame," he answered; "on the contrary, it is made of the best quality of corn; flour from Etampes."

"How could you tell?" asked Eugène.

"By the color, by the flavor."

"You knew the flavor by the smell, I suppose," said Mme. Vauquer. "You have grown so economical, you will find out how to live on the smell of cooking at last."

"Take out a patent for it then," cried the Museum official; "you would make a handsome fortune."

"Never mind him," said the artist; "he does that sort of thing to delude us into thinking that he was a vermicelli maker."

"Your nose is a corn-sampler, it appears?" inquired the official.

"Corn *what*?" asked Bianchon.

"Corn-el."

"Corn-et."

"Corn-elian."

"Corn-ice."

"Corn-ucopia."

"Corn-crake."

"Corn-cockle."

"Corn-orama."

The eight responses came like a rolling fire from every part of the room, and the laughter that followed was the

more uproarious because poor old Goriot stared at the others with a puzzled look, like a foreigner trying to catch the meaning of words in a language that he does not understand.

"Corn? . . ." he said, turning to Vautrin, his next neighbor.

"Corn on your foot, old man!" said Vautrin, and he drove old Goriot's cap down over his eyes by a blow on the crown.

The poor old man thus suddenly attacked was for a moment too bewildered to do anything. Christophe carried off his plate, thinking that he had finished his soup, so that when Goriot had pushed back his cap from his eyes his spoon encountered the table. Every one burst out laughing. "You are a disagreeable joker, sir," said the old man, "and if you take any further liberties with me—"

"Well, what then, old boy?" Vautrin interrupted.

"Well, then, you shall pay dearly for it some day—"

"Down below, eh?" said the artist, "in the little dark corner where they put naughty boys."

"Well, mademoiselle," Vautrin said, turning to Victorine, "you are eating nothing. So papa was refractory, was he?"

"A monster!" said Mme. Couture.

"Mademoiselle might make application for aliment pending her suit; she is not eating anything. Eh! eh! just see how old Goriot is staring at Mlle. Victorine!"

The old man had forgotten his dinner, he was so absorbed in gazing at the poor girl; the sorrow in her face was unmistakable—the slighted love of a child whose father would not recognize her.

"We are mistaken about old Goriot, my dear boy," said Eugène in a low voice. "He is not an idiot, nor wanting energy. Try your Gall system on him, and let me know what you think. I saw him crush a silver dish last night as if it had been made of wax; there seems to be something extraordinary going on in his mind just now, to judge by his

face. His life is so mysterious that it must be worth studying. Oh! you may laugh, Bianchon; I am not joking."

"The man is a subject, is he?" said Bianchon; "all right! I will dissect him, if he will give me a chance."

"No; feel his bumps."

"Hm!—his stupidity might perhaps be contagious."

The next day Rastignac dressed himself very elegantly, and about three o'clock in the afternoon went to call on Mme. de Restaud. On the way thither he indulged in the wild intoxicating dreams which fill a young head so full of delicious excitement. Young men at his age take no account of obstacles nor of dangers; they see success in every direction; imagination has free play, and turns their lives into a romance; they are saddened or discouraged by the collapse of one of the wild visionary schemes that have no existence save in their heated fancy. If youth were not ignorant and timid, civilization would be impossible.

Eugène took unheard-of pains to keep himself in a spotless condition, but on his way through the streets he began to think about Mme. de Restaud and what he should say to her. He equipped himself with wit, rehearsed repartees in the course of an imaginary conversation, and prepared certain neat speeches à la Talleyrand, conjuring up a series of small events which should prepare the way for the declaration on which he had based his future; and during these musings the law student was bespattered with mud, and by the time he reached the Palais Royal he was obliged to have his boots blacked and his trousers brushed.

"If I were rich," he said, as he changed the five-franc piece he had brought with him in case anything might happen, "I would take a cab, then I could think at my ease."

At last he reached the Rue du Helder, and asked for the Comtesse de Restaud. He bore the contemptuous glances of the servants, who had seen him cross the court on foot, with the cold fury of a man who knows that he will succeed some day. He understood the meaning of their glances at

once, for he had felt his inferiority as soon as he entered the court, where a smart cab was waiting. All the delights of life in Paris seemed to be implied by this visible and manifest sign of luxury and extravagance. A fine horse, in magnificent harness, was pawing the ground, and all at once the law student felt out of humor with himself. Every compartment in his brain which he had thought to find so full of wit was bolted fast; he grew positively stupid. He sent up his name to the Countess, and waited in the antechamber, standing on one foot before a window that looked out upon the court; mechanically he leaned his elbow against the sash, and stared before him. The time seemed long; he would have left the house but for the southern tenacity of purpose which works miracles when it is single-minded.

"Madame is in her boudoir, and cannot see any one at present, sir," said the servant. "She gave me no answer; but if you will go into the dining-room, there is some one already there."

Rastignac was impressed with a sense of the formidable power of the lackey who can accuse or condemn his masters by a word; he coolly opened the door by which the man had just entered the antechamber, meaning, no doubt, to show these insolent flunkeys that he was familiar with the house; but he found that he had thoughtlessly precipitated himself into a small room full of dresses, where lamps were standing, and hot-water pipes, on which towels were being dried; a dark passage and a back staircase lay beyond it. Stifled laughter from the antechamber added to his confusion.

"This way to the drawing-room, sir," said the servant, with the exaggerated respect which seemed to be one more jest at his expense.

Eugène turned so quickly that he stumbled against a bath. By good luck, he managed to keep his hat on his head, and saved it from immersion in the water; but just as he turned, a door opened at the further end of the dark passage, dimly lighted by a small lamp. Rastignac heard voices and the sound of a kiss; one of the speakers was Mme. de Restaud,

the other was old Goriot. Eugène followed the servant through the dining-room into the drawing-room; he went to a window that looked out into the courtyard, and stood there for a while. He meant to know whether this Goriot was really the Goriot that he knew. His heart beat unwontedly fast; he remembered Vautrin's hideous insinuations. A well-dressed young man suddenly emerged from the room almost as Eugène entered it, saying impatiently to the servant who stood at the door: "I am going, Maurice. Tell Madame la Comtesse that I waited more than half an hour for her."

Whereupon this insolent being, who, doubtless, had a right to be insolent, sang an Italian trill, and went toward the window where Eugène was standing, moved thereto quite as much by a desire to see the student's face as by a wish to look out into the courtyard.

"But M. le Comte had better wait a moment longer; Madame is disengaged," said Maurice, as he returned to the antechamber.

Just at that moment old Goriot appeared close to the gate; he had emerged from a door at the foot of the back staircase. The worthy soul was preparing to open his umbrella regardless of the fact that the great gate had opened to admit a tilbury, in which a young man with a ribbon at his button-hole was seated. Old Goriot had scarcely time to start back and save himself. The horse took fright at the umbrella, swerved, and dashed forward toward the flight of steps. The young man looked round in annoyance, saw old Goriot, and greeted him as he went out with constrained courtesy, such as people usually show to a money-lender so long as they require his services, or the sort of respect they feel it necessary to show for some one whose reputation has been blown upon, so that they blush to acknowledge his acquaintance. Old Goriot gave him a little friendly nod and a good-natured smile. All this happened with lightning speed. Eugène was so deeply interested that he forgot that he was not alone till he suddenly heard the Countess's voice.

"Oh! Maxime, were you going away?" she said reproachfully, with a shade of pique in her manner. The Countess had not seen the incident nor the entrance of the tilbury. Rastignac turned abruptly and saw her standing before him, coquettishly dressed in a loose white cashmere gown with knots of rose-colored ribbon here and there; her hair was carelessly coiled about her head, as is the wont of Parisian women in the morning; there was a soft fragrance about her—doubtless she was fresh from a bath; her graceful form seemed more flexible, her beauty more luxuriant. Her eyes glistened. A young man can see everything at a glance; he feels the radiant influence of woman as a plant discerns and absorbs its nutriment from the air; he did not need to touch her hands to feel their cool freshness. He saw faint rose tints through the cashmere of the dressing-gown; it had fallen slightly open, giving glimpses of a bare throat, on which the student's eyes rested. The Countess had no need of the adventitious aid of corsets; her girdle defined the outlines of her slender waist; her throat was a challenge to love; her feet, thrust into slippers, were daintily small. As Maxime took her hand and kissed it, Eugène became aware of Maxime's existence, and the Countess saw Eugène.

"Oh! is that you, M. de Rastignac? I am very glad to see you," she said, but there was something in her manner that a shrewd observer would have taken as a hint to depart.

Maxime, as the Countess Anastasie had called the young man with the haughty insolence of bearing, looked from Eugène to the lady, and from the lady to Eugène; it was sufficiently evident that he wished to be rid of the latter. An exact and faithful rendering of the glance might be given in the words: "Look here, my dear; I hope you intend to send this little whippet-snapper about his business."

The Countess consulted the young man's face with an intent submissiveness that betrays all the secrets of a woman's heart, and Rastignac all at once began to hate him violently. To begin with, the sight of the fair carefully arranged curls on the other's comely head had convinced him that his own

crop was hideous; Maxime's boots, moreover, were elegant and spotless, while his own, in spite of all his care, bore some traces of his recent walk; and, finally, Maxime's overcoat fitted the outline of his figure gracefully, he looked like a pretty woman, while Eugène was wearing a black coat at half-past two. The quick-witted child of the Charente felt the disadvantage at which he was placed beside this tall, slender dandy, with the clear gaze and the pale face, one of those men who would ruin orphan children without scruple. Mme. de Restaud fled into the next room without waiting for Eugène to speak; shaking out the skirts of her dressing-gown in her flight, so that she looked like a white butterfly, and Maxime hurried after her. Eugène in a fury followed Maxime and the Countess, and the three stood once more face to face by the hearth in the large drawing-room. The law student felt quite sure that the odious Maxime found him in the way, and even at the risk of displeasing Mme. de Restaud, he meant to annoy the dandy. It had struck him all at once that he had seen the young man before at Mme. de Beauséant's ball; he guessed the relation between Maxime and Mme. de Restaud; and with the youthful audacity that commits prodigious blunders or achieves signal success, he said to himself, "This is my rival; I mean to cut him out."

Rash resolve! He did not know that M. le Comte Maxime de Trailles would wait till he was insulted, so as to fire first and kill his man. Eugène was a sportsman and a good shot, but he had not yet hit the bull's-eye twenty times out of twenty-two. The young Count dropped into a low chair by the hearth, took up the tongs, and made up the fire so violently and so sulkily that Anastasie's fair face suddenly clouded over. She turned to Eugène with a cool, questioning glance that asked plainly, "Why do you not go?" a glance which well-bred people regard as a cue to make their exit.

Eugène assumed an amiable expression.

"Madame," he began, "I hastened to call upon you—"

He stopped short. The door opened, and the owner of

the tilbury suddenly appeared. He had left his hat outside, and did not greet the Countess; he looked meditatively at Rastignac, and held out his hand to Maxime with a cordial "Good-morning," that astonished Eugène not a little. The young provincial did not understand the amenities of a triple alliance.

"M. de Restaud," said the Countess, introducing her husband to the law student.

Eugène bowed profoundly.

"This gentleman," she continued, presenting Eugène to her husband, "is M. de Rastignac; he is related to Mme. la Vicomtesse de Beauséant through the Marcillacs; I had the pleasure of meeting him at her last ball."

Related to Mme. la Vicomtesse de Beauséant through the Marcillacs! These words, on which the Countess threw ever so slight an emphasis, by reason of the pride that the mistress of a house takes in showing that she only receives people of distinction as visitors in her house, produced a magical effect. The Count's stiff manner relaxed at once as he returned the student's bow.

"Delighted to have an opportunity of making your acquaintance," he said.

Maxime de Trailles himself gave Eugène an uneasy glance, and suddenly dropped his insolent manner. The mighty name had all the power of a fairy's wand; those closed compartments in the southern brain flew open again; Rastignac's carefully drilled faculties returned. It was as if a sudden light had pierced the obscurity of this upper world of Paris, and he began to see, though everything was indistinct as yet. Mme. Vauquer's lodging-house and old Goriot were very far remote from his thoughts.

"I thought that the Marcillacs were extinct," the Comte de Restaud said, addressing Eugène.

"Yes, they are extinct," answered the law student. "My great-uncle, the Chevalier de Rastignac, married the heiress of the Marcillac family. They had only one daughter, who married the Maréchal de Clarimbault, Mme. de Beauséant's

grandfather on the mother's side. We are the younger branch of the family, and the younger branch is all the poorer because my great-uncle, the Vice-Admiral, lost all that he had in the King's service. The Government during the Revolution refused to admit our claims when the *Compagnie des Indes* was liquidated."

"Was not your great-uncle in command of the '*Vengeur*' before 1789?"

"Yes."

"Then he would be acquainted with my grandfather, who commanded the '*Warwick*.'"

Maxime looked at Mme. de Restaud and shrugged his shoulders, as who should say, "If he is going to discuss nautical matters with that fellow, it is all over with us." Anastasie understood the glance that M. de Trailles gave her. With a woman's admirable tact, she began to smile, and said:

"Come with me, Maxime; I have something to say to you. We will leave you two gentlemen to sail in company on board the '*Warwick*' and the '*Vengeur*.'"

She rose to her feet and signed to Maxime to follow her, mirth and mischief in her whole attitude, and the two went in the direction of the boudoir. The *morganatic* couple (to use a convenient German expression which has no exact equivalent) had reached the door, when the Count interrupted himself in his talk with Eugène.

"Anastasie!" he cried pettishly, "just stay a moment, dear; you know very well that—"

"I am coming back in a minute," she interrupted; "I have a commission for Maxime to execute, and I want to tell him about it."

She came back almost immediately. She had noticed the inflection in her husband's voice, and knew that it would not be safe to retire to the boudoir: like all women who are compelled to study their husbands' characters in order to have their own way, and whose business it is to know exactly how far they can go without endangering a good understanding,

she was very careful to avoid petty collisions in domestic life. It was Eugène who had brought about this untoward incident; so the Countess looked at Maxime and indicated the law student with an air of exasperation. M. de Trailles addressed the Count, the Countess, and Eugène with the pointed remark, "You are busy, I do not want to interrupt you; good-day," and he went.

"Just wait a moment, Maxime!" the Count called after him.

"Come and dine with us," said the Countess, leaving Eugène and her husband together once more. She followed Maxime into the little drawing-room, where they sat together sufficiently long to feel sure that Rastignac had taken his leave.

The law student heard their laughter, and their voices, and the pauses in their talk; he grew malicious, exerted his conversational powers for M. de Restaud, flattered him, and drew him into discussions, to the end that he might see the Countess again and discover the nature of her relations with old Goriot. This Countess with a husband and a lover, for Maxime clearly was her lover, was a mystery. What was the secret tie that bound her to the old tradesman? This mystery he meant to penetrate, hoping by its means to gain a sovereign ascendancy over this fair typical Parisian.

"Anastasie!" the Count called again to his wife.

"Poor Maxime!" she said, addressing the young man. "Come, we must resign ourselves. This evening—"

"I hope, Nasie," he said in her ear, "that you will give orders not to admit that youngster, whose eyes light up like live coals when he looks at you. He will make you a declaration, and compromise you, and then you will compel me to kill him."

"Are you mad, Maxime?" she said. "A young lad of a student is, on the contrary, a capital lightning-conductor; is not that so? Of course, I mean to make Restaud furiously jealous of him."

Maxime burst out laughing, and went out, followed by

the Countess, who stood at the window to watch him into his carriage; he shook his whip, and made his horse prance. She only returned when the great gate had been closed after him.

"What do you think, dear?" cried the Count, her husband, "this gentleman's family estate is not far from Verteuil, on the Charente; his great-uncle and my grandfather were acquainted."

"Delighted to find that we have acquaintances in common," said the Countess, with a preoccupied manner.

"More than you think," said Eugène, in a low voice.

"What do you mean?" she asked quickly.

"Why, only just now," said the student, "I saw a gentleman go out at the gate, old Goriot, my next-door neighbor in the house where I am lodging."

At the sound of this name, and the prefix that embellished it, the Count, who was stirring the fire, let the tongs fall as though they had burned his fingers, and rose to his feet.

"Sir," he cried, "you might have called him 'Monsieur Goriot'!"

The Countess turned pale at first at the sight of her husband's vexation, then she reddened; clearly she was embarrassed, her answer was made in a tone that she tried to make natural, and with an air of assumed carelessness—

"You could not know any one who is dearer to us both."

She broke off, glanced at the piano as if some fancy had crossed her mind, and asked, "Are you fond of music, M. de Rastignac?"

"Exceedingly," answered Eugene, flushing, and disconcerted by a dim suspicion that he had somehow been guilty of a clumsy piece of folly.

"Do you sing?" she cried, going to the piano, and, sitting down before it, she swept her fingers over the keyboard from end to end. R-r-r-ah!

"No, madame."

The Comte de Restaud walked to and fro.

"That is a pity; you are without one great means of success.—Ca-ro, ca-a-ro, ca-a-a-ro, non du-bi-ta-re," sang the Countess.

Eugène had a second time waved a magic wand when he uttered Goriot's name, but the effect seemed to be entirely opposite to that produced by the formula "related to Mme. de Beauséant." His position was not unlike that of some visitor permitted as a favor to inspect a private collection of curiosities, when by inadvertence he comes into collision with a glass case full of sculptured figures, and three or four heads, imperfectly secured, fall at the shock. He wished the earth would open and swallow him. Mme. de Restaud's expression was reserved and chilly, her eyes had grown indifferent, and sedulously avoided meeting those of the unlucky student of law.

"Madame," he said, "you wish to talk with M. de Restaud; permit me to wish you good-day—"

The Countess interrupted him by a gesture, saying hastily, "Whenever you come to see us, both M. de Restaud and I shall be delighted to see you."

Eugène made a profound bow and took his leave, followed by M. de Restaud, who insisted, in spite of his remonstrances, on accompanying him into the hall.

"Neither your mistress nor I are at home to that gentleman when he calls," the Count said to Maurice.

As Eugène set foot on the steps, he saw that it was raining.

"Come," said he to himself, "somehow I have just made a mess of it, I do not know how. And now I am going to spoil my hat and coat into the bargain. I ought to stop in my corner, grind away at law, and never look to be anything but a boorish country magistrate. How can I go into society, when to manage properly you want a lot of cabs, varnished boots, gold watch-chains, and all sorts of things; you have to wear white doeskin gloves that cost six francs in the morning, and primrose kid gloves every evening? A fig for that old humbug of a Goriot!"

When he reached the street door, the driver of a hackney coach, who had probably just deposited a wedding party at their door, and asked nothing better than a chance of making a little money for himself without his employer's knowledge, saw that Eugène had no umbrella, remarked his black coat, white waistcoat, yellow gloves, and varnished boots, and stopped and looked at him inquiringly. Eugène, in the blind desperation that drives a young man to plunge deeper and deeper into an abyss, as if he might hope to find a fortunate issue in its lowest depths, nodded in reply to the driver's signal, and stepped into the cab; a few stray petals of orange blossom and scraps of wire bore witness to its recent occupation by a wedding party.

"Where am I to drive, sir?" demanded the man, who, by this time, had taken off his white gloves.

"Confound it!" Eugène said to himself, "I am in for it now, and at least I will not spend cab-hire for nothing!—Drive to the Hotel Beauséant," he said aloud.

"Which?" asked the man, a portentous word that reduced Eugène to confusion. This young man of fashion, *species incerta*, did not know that there were two Hotels Beauséant; he was not aware how rich he was in relations who did not care about him.

"The Vicomte de Beauséant, Rue—"

"De Grenelle," interrupted the driver, with a jerk of his head. "You see, there are the hotels of the Marquis and Comte de Beauséant in the Rue Saint-Dominique," he added, drawing up the step.

"I know all about that," said Eugène, severely.—"Everybody is laughing at me to-day, it seems!" he said to himself, as he deposited his hat on the opposite seat. "This escapade will cost me a king's ransom, but, at any rate, I shall call on my so-called cousin in a thoroughly aristocratic fashion. Goriot has cost me ten francs already, the old scoundrel! My word! I will tell Mme. de Beauséant about my adventure; perhaps it may amuse her. Doubtless she will know the secret of the criminal relation between that handsome

woman and the old rat without a tail. It would be better to find favor in my cousin's eyes than to come in contact with that shameless woman, who seems to me to have very expensive tastes. Surely the beautiful Vicomtesse's personal interest would turn the scale for me, when the mere mention of her name produces such an effect. Let us look higher. If you set yourself to carry the heights of heaven, you must face God."

The innumerable thoughts that surged through his brain might be summed up in these phrases. He grew calmer, and recovered something of his assurance as he watched the falling rain. He told himself that though he was about to squander two of the precious five-franc pieces that remained to him, the money was well laid out in preserving his coat, boots, and hat; and his cabman's cry of "Gate, if you please," almost put him in spirits. A Swiss, in scarlet and gold, appeared, the great door groaned on its hinges, and Rastignac, with sweet satisfaction, beheld his equipage pass under the archway and stop before the flight of steps beneath the awning. The driver, in a blue-and-red great-coat, dismounted and let down the step. As Eugène stepped out of the cab, he heard smothered laughter from the peristyle. Three or four lackeys were making merry over the festal appearance of the vehicle. In another moment the law student was enlightened as to the cause of their hilarity; he felt the full force of the contrast between his equipage and one of the smartest broughams in Paris; a coachman, with powdered hair, seemed to find it difficult to hold a pair of spirited horses, who stood chafing the bit. In Mme. de Restaud's courtyard, in the Chaussée d'Antin, he had seen the neat turnout of a young man of six-and-twenty; in the Faubourg Saint-Germain he found the luxurious equipage of a man of rank; thirty thousand francs would not have purchased it.

"Who can be here?" said Eugène to himself. He began to understand, though somewhat tardily, that he must not expect to find many women in Paris who were not already

appropriated, and that the capture of one of these queens would be likely to cost something more than bloodshed. "Confound it all! I expect my cousin also has her Maxime."

He went up the steps, feeling that he was a blighted being. The glass door was opened for him; the servants were as solemn as jackasses under the curry-comb. So far, Eugène had only been in the ballroom on the ground floor of the Hotel Beauséant; the fête had followed so closely on the invitation that he had not had time to call on his cousin, and had therefore never seen Mme. de Beauséant's apartments; he was about to behold for the first time a great lady among the wonderful and elegant surroundings that reveal her character and reflect her daily life. He was the more curious, because Mme. de Restaud's drawing-room had provided him with a standard of comparison.

At half-past four the Vicomtesse de Beauséant was visible. Five minutes earlier she would not have received her cousin, but Eugène knew nothing of the recognized routine of various houses in Paris. He was conducted up the wide, white-painted, crimson-carpeted staircase, between the gilded balusters and masses of flowering plants, to Mme. de Beauséant's apartments. He did not know the rumor current about Mme. de Beauséant, one of the biographies told, with variations, in whispers, every evening in the salons of Paris.

For three years past her name had been spoken of in connection with that of one of the most wealthy and distinguished Portuguese nobles, the Marquis d'Ajuda-Pinto. It was one of those innocent *liaisons* which possess so much charm for the two thus attached to each other that they find the presence of a third person intolerable. The Vicomte de Beauséant, therefore, had himself set an example to the rest of the world by respecting, with as good a grace as might be, this morganatic union. Any one who came to call on the Vicomtesse in the early days of this friendship was sure to find the Marquis d'Ajuda-Pinto there. As, under the circumstances, Mme. de Beauséant could not very well shut her door against

these visitors, she gave them such a cold reception, and showed so much interest in the study of the ceiling, that no one could fail to understand how much he bored her; and when it became known in Paris that Mme. de Beauséant was bored by callers between two and four o'clock, she was left in perfect solitude during that interval. She went to the Bouffons or to the Opéra with M. de Beauséant and M. d'Ajuda-Pinto; and M. de Beauséant, like a well-bred man of the world, always left his wife and the Portuguese as soon as he had installed them. But M. d'Ajuda-Pinto must marry, and a Mlle. de Rochefide was the young lady. In the whole fashionable world there was but one person who as yet knew nothing of the arrangement, and that was Mme. de Beauséant. Some of her friends had hinted at the possibility, and she had laughed at them, believing that envy had prompted those ladies to try to make mischief. And now, though the banns were about to be published, and although the handsome Portuguese had come that day to break the news to the Vicomtesse, he had not found courage as yet to say one word about his treachery. How was it? Nothing is doubtless more difficult than the notification of an *ultimatum* of this kind. There are men who feel more at their ease when they stand up before another man who threatens their lives with sword or pistol than in the presence of a woman who, after two hours of lamentations and reproaches, falls into a dead swoon and requires salts. At this moment, therefore, M. d'Ajuda-Pinto was on thorns, and anxious to take his leave. He told himself that in some way or other the news would reach Mme. de Beauséant; he would write, it would be much better to do it by letter, and not to utter the words that should stab her to the heart.

So when the servant announced M. Eugène de Rastignac, the Marquis d'Ajuda-Pinto trembled with joy. To be sure, a loving woman shows even more ingenuity in inventing doubts of her lover than in varying the monotony of his happiness; and when she is about to be forsaken, she instinctively interprets every gesture as rapidly as Virgil's

courser detected the presence of his companion by snuffing the breeze. It was impossible, therefore, that Mme. de Beauséant should not detect that involuntary thrill of satisfaction; slight though it was, it was appalling in its artlessness.

Eugène had yet to learn that no one in Paris should present himself in any house without first making himself acquainted with the whole history of its owner, and of its owner's wife and family, so that he may avoid making any of the terrible blunders which in Poland draw forth the picturesque exclamation, "Harness five bullocks to your cart!" probably because you will need them all to pull you out of the quagmire into which a false step has plunged you. If, down to the present day, our language has no name for these conversational disasters, it is probably because they are believed to be impossible, the publicity given in Paris to every scandal is so prodigious. After the awkward incident at Mme. de Restaud's, no one but Eugène could have reappeared in his character of bullock-driver in Mme. de Beauséant's drawing-room. But if Mme. de Restaud and M. de Trailles had found him horribly in the way, M. d'Ajuda hailed his coming with relief.

"Good-by," said the Portuguese, hurrying to the door, as Eugène made his entrance into a dainty little pink and gray drawing-room, where luxury seemed nothing more than good taste.

"Until this evening," said Mme. de Beauséant, turning her head to give the Marquis a glance. "We are going to the Bouffons, are we not?"

"I cannot go," he said, with his fingers on the door handle.

Mme. de Beauséant rose and beckoned to him to return. She did not pay the slightest attention to Eugène, who stood there dazzled by the sparkling marvels around him; he began to think that this was some story out of the "Arabian Nights" made real, and did not know where to hide himself, when the woman before him seemed to be unconscious of his existence.

The Vicomtesse had raised the forefinger of her right hand, and gracefully signed to the Marquis to seat himself beside her. The Marquis felt the imperious sway of passion in her gesture; he came back toward her. Eugène watched him, not without a feeling of envy.

"That is the owner of the brougham!" he said to himself. "But is it necessary to have a pair of spirited horses, servants in livery, and torrents of gold to draw a glance from a woman here in Paris?"

The demon of luxury gnawed at his heart, greed burned in his veins, his throat was parched with the thirst of gold.

He had a hundred and thirty francs every quarter. His father, mother, brothers, sisters, and aunt did not spend two hundred francs a month among them. This swift comparison between his present condition and the aims he had in view helped to benumb his faculties.

"Why not?" the Vicomtesse was saying, as she smiled at the Portuguese. "Why cannot you come to the Italiens?"

"Affairs! I am to dine with the English Ambassador."

"Throw him over."

When a man once enters on a course of deception, he is compelled to add lie to lie. M. d'Ajuda therefore said, smiling, "Do you lay your commands on me?"

"Yes, certainly."

"That was what I wanted to have you say to me," he answered, dissembling his feelings in a glance which would have reassured any other woman.

He took the Vicomtesse's hand, kissed it, and went.

Eugène ran his fingers through his hair, and constrained himself to bow. He thought that now Mme. de Beauséant would give him her attention; but suddenly she sprang forward, rushed to a window in the gallery, and watched M. d'Ajuda step into his carriage; she listened to the order that he gave, and heard the Swiss repeat it to the coachman:

"To M. de Rochefide's house."

Those words, and the way in which M. d'Ajuda flung himself back in the carriage, were like a lightning flash and

a thunderbolt for her; she walked back again with a deadly fear gnawing at her heart. The most terrible catastrophes only happen among the heights. The Vicomtesse went to her own room, sat down at a table, and took up a sheet of dainty notepaper.

"When, instead of dining with the English Ambassador," she wrote, "you go to the Rochefides, you owe me an explanation, which I am waiting to hear."

She retraced several of the letters, for her hand was trembling so that they were indistinct; then she signed the note with an initial C for "Claire de Bourgogne," and rang the bell.

"Jacques," she said to the servant, who appeared immediately, "take this note to M. de Rochefide's house at half-past seven, and ask for the Marquis d'Ajuda. If M. d'Ajuda is there, leave the note without waiting for an answer; if he is not there, bring the note back to me."

"Madame la Vicomtesse, there is a visitor in the drawing-room."

"Ah! yes, of course," she said, opening the door.

Eugène was beginning to feel very uncomfortable, but at last the Vicomtesse appeared; she spoke to him, and the tremulous tones of her voice vibrated through his heart.

"Pardon me, monsieur," she said; "I had a letter to write. Now I am quite at liberty."

She scarcely knew what she was saying, for even as she spoke she thought, "Ah! he means to marry Mlle. de Rochefide? But is he still free? This evening the marriage shall be broken off, or else . . . But before to-morrow I shall know."

"Cousin . . ." the student replied.

"Eh?" said the Countess, with an insolent glance that sent a cold shudder through Eugène; he understood what that "Eh?" meant; he had learned a great deal in three hours, and his wits were on the alert. He reddened:

"Madame . . ." he began; he hesitated a moment, and then went on. "Pardon me; I am in such need of protection that the merest scrap of relationship could do me no harm."

Mme. de Beauséant smiled, but there was sadness in her smile; even now she felt forebodings of the coming pain, the air she breathed was heavy with the storm that was about to burst.

"If you knew how my family are situated," he went on, "you would love to play the part of a beneficent fairy god-mother who graciously clears the obstacles from the path of her protégé."

"Well, cousin," she said, laughing, "and how can I be of service to you?"

"But do I know even that? I am distantly related to you, and this obscure and remote relationship is even now a perfect godsend to me. You have confused my ideas; I cannot remember the things that I meant to say to you. I know no one else here in Paris. . . . Ah! if I could only ask you to counsel me, ask you to look upon me as a poor child who would fain cling to the hem of your dress, who would lay down his life for you."

"Would you kill a man for me?"

"Two," said Eugène.

"You, child! Yes, you are a child," she said, keeping back the tears that came to her eyes; "you would love sincerely."

"Oh!" he cried, flinging up his head.

The audacity of the student's answer interested the Vicomtesse in him. The Southern brain was beginning to scheme for the first time. Between Mme. de Restaud's blue boudoir and Mme. de Beauséant's rose-colored drawing-room he had made a three years' advance in a kind of law which is not a recognized study in Paris, although it is a sort of higher jurisprudence, and, when well understood, is a high-road to success of every kind.

"Ah! this is what I meant to say!" said Eugène. "I

met Mme. de Restaud at your ball, and this morning I went to see her."

"You must have been very much in the way," said Mme. de Beauséant, smiling as she spoke.

"Yes, indeed. I am a novice, and my blunders will set every one against me, if you do not give me your counsel. I believe that in Paris it is very difficult to meet with a young, beautiful, and wealthy woman of fashion who would be willing to teach me, what you women can explain so well—life. I shall find a M. de Trailles everywhere. So I have come to you to ask you to give me a key to a puzzle, to entreat you to tell me what sort of blunder I made this morning. I mentioned an old man—"

"Madame la Duchesse de Langeais," Jacques cut the student short; Eugène gave expression to his intense annoyance by a gesture.

"If you mean to succeed," said the Vicomtesse in a low voice, "in the first place you must not be so demonstrative."

"Ah! good-morning, dear," she continued, and rising and crossing the room, she grasped the Duchess's hands as affectionately as if they had been sisters; the Duchess responded in the prettiest and most gracious way.

"Two intimate friends!" said Rastignac to himself. "Henceforward I shall have two protectresses; those two women are great friends, no doubt, and this new-comer will doubtless interest herself in her friend's cousin."

"To what happy inspiration do I owe this piece of good fortune, dear Antoinette?" asked Mme. de Beauséant.

"Well, I saw M. d'Ajuda-Pinto at M. de Rochefide's door, so I thought that if I came I should find you alone."

Mme. de Beauséant's mouth did not tighten, her color did not rise, her expression did not alter, or rather, her brow seemed to clear as the Duchess uttered those deadly words:

"If I had known that you were engaged—" the speaker added, glancing at Eugène.

"This gentleman is M. Eugène de Rastignac, one of

my cousins," said the Vicomtesse. "Have you any news of General de Montriveau?" she continued. "Sérizy told me yesterday that he never goes anywhere now; has he been to see you to-day?"

It was believed that the Duchess was desperately in love with M. de Montriveau, and that he was a faithless lover; she felt the question in her very heart, and her face flushed as she answered:

"He was at the Elysée yesterday."

"In attendance?"

"Claire," returned the Duchess, and hatred overflowed in the glances she threw at Mme. de Beauséant; "of course you know that M. d'Ajuda-Pinto is going to marry Mlle. de Rochefide; the banns will be published to-morrow."

This thrust was too cruel; the Vicomtesse's face grew white, but she answered, laughing, "One of those rumors that fools amuse themselves with. What should induce M. d'Ajuda to take one of the noblest names in Portugal to the Rochefides? The Rochefides were only ennobled yesterday."

"But Berthe will have two hundred thousand livres a year, they say."

"M. d'Ajuda is too wealthy to marry for money."

"But, my dear, Mlle. de Rochefide is a charming girl."

"Indeed?"

"And, as a matter of fact, he is dining with them to-day; the thing is settled. It is very surprising to me that you should know so little about it."

Mme. de Beauséant turned to Rastignac. "What was the blunder that you made, monsieur?" she asked. "The poor boy is only just launched into the world, Antoinette, so that he understands nothing of all this that we are speaking of. Be merciful to him, and let us finish our talk to-morrow. Everything will be announced to-morrow, you know, and your kind informal communication can be accompanied by official confirmation."

The Duchess gave Eugène one of those insolent glances

that measure a man from head to foot, and leave him crushed and annihilated.

"Madame, I have unwittingly plunged a dagger into Mme. de Réstaud's heart; unwittingly—therein lies my offence," said the student of law, whose keen brain had served him sufficiently well, for he had detected the biting epigrams that lurked beneath this friendly talk. "You continue to receive, possibly you fear, those who know the amount of pain that they deliberately inflict; but a clumsy blunderer who has no idea how deeply he wounds is looked upon as a fool who does not know how to make use of his opportunities, and every one despises him."

Mme. de Beauséant gave the student a glance, one of those glances in which a great soul can mingle dignity and gratitude. It was like balm to the law student, who was still smarting under the Duchess's insolent scrutiny; she had looked at him as an auctioneer might look at some article to appraise its value.

"Imagine, too, that I had just made some progress with the Comte de Restaud; for I should tell you, madame," he went on, turning to the Duchess with a mixture of humility and malice in his manner, "that as yet I am only a poor devil of a student, very much alone in the world, and very poor—"

"You should not tell us that, M. de Rastignac. We women never care about anything that no one else will take."

"Bah!" said Eugène. "I am only two-and-twenty, and I must make up my mind to the drawbacks of my time of life. Besides, I am confessing my sins, and it would be impossible to kneel in a more charming confessional; you commit your sins in one drawing-room, and receive absolution for them in another."

The Duchess's expression grew colder; she did not like the flippant tone of these remarks, and showed that she considered them to be in bad taste by turning to the Vicomtesse with—"This gentleman has only just come—"

Mme. de Beauseant began to laugh outright at her cousin and at the Duchess both.

"He has only just come to Paris, dear, and is in search of some one who will give him lessons in good taste."

"Mme. la Duchesse," said Eugène, "is it not natural to wish to be initiated into the mysteries which charm us?" ("Come, now," he said to himself, "my language is superfinely elegant, I'm sure.")

"But Mme. de Restaud is herself, I believe, M. de Trailles' pupil," said the Duchess.

"Of that I had no idea, madame," answered the law student, "so I rashly came between them. In fact, I got on very well with the lady's husband, and his wife tolerated me for a time until I took it into my head to tell them that I knew some one of whom I had just caught a glimpse as he went out by a back staircase, a man who had given the Countess a kiss at the end of a passage."

"Who was it?" both women asked together.

"An old man who lives at the rate of two louis a month in the Faubourg Saint-Marceau, where I, a poor student, lodge likewise. He is a truly unfortunate creature, everybody laughs at him—we all call him 'Father Goriot.'"

"Why, child that you are," cried the Vicomtesse, "Mme. de Restaud was a Mlle. Goriot!"

"The daughter of a vermicelli manufacturer," the Duchess added; "and when the little creature went to Court, the daughter of a pastry-cook was presented on the same day. Do you remember, Claire? The King began to laugh, and made some joke in Latin about flour. People—what was it?—people—"

"*Ejusdem farinae*," said Eugène.

"Yes, that was it," said the Duchess.

"Oh! is that her father?" the law student continued, aghast.

"Yes, certainly; the old man had two daughters; he dotes on them, so to speak, though they will scarcely acknowledge him."

"Didn't the second daughter marry a banker with a German name?" the Vicomtesse asked, turning to Mme. de Langeais, "a Baron de Nucingen? And her name is Delphine, is it not? Isn't she a fair-haired woman who has a side-box at the Opéra? She comes sometimes to the Bouffons, and laughs loudly to attract attention."

The Duchess smiled, and said:

"I wonder at you, dear. Why do you take so much interest in people of that kind? One must have been as madly in love as Restaud was, to be infatuated with Mlle. Anastasie and her flour sacks. Oh! he will not find her a good bargain! She is in M. de Trailles' hands, and he will ruin her."

"And they do not acknowledge their father!" Eugène repeated.

"Oh! well, yes, their father, the father, a father," replied the Vicomtesse, "a kind father who gave them each five or six hundred thousand francs, it is said, to secure their happiness by marrying them well; while he only kept eight or ten thousand livres a year for himself, thinking that his daughters would always be his daughters, thinking that in them he would live his life twice over again, that in their houses he should find two homes, where he would be loved and looked up to, and made much of. And in two years' time both his sons-in-law had turned him out of their houses as if he were one of the lowest outcasts."

Tears came into Eugène's eyes. He was still under the spell of youthful beliefs, he had but just left home, pure and sacred feelings had been stirred within him, and this was his first day on the battlefield of civilization in Paris. Genuine feeling is so infectious that for a moment the three looked at each other in silence.

"*Eh, mon Dieu!*" said Mme. de Langeais; "yes, it seems very horrible, and yet we see such things every day. Is there not a reason for it? Tell me, dear, have you ever really thought what a son-in-law is? A son-in-law is the man for whom we bring up, you and I, a dear little one,

bound to us very closely in innumerable ways; for seventeen years she will be the joy of her family, its 'white soul,' as Lamartine says, and suddenly she will become its scourge. When *he* comes and takes her from us, his love from the very beginning is like an axe laid to the root of all the old affection in our darling's heart, and all the ties that bound her to her family are severed. But yesterday our little daughter thought of no one but her mother and father, as we had no thought that was not for her; by to-morrow she will have become a hostile stranger. The tragedy is always going on under our eyes. On the one hand you see a father who has sacrificed himself to his son, and his daughter-in-law shows him the last degree of insolence. On the other hand, it is the son-in-law who turns his wife's mother out of the house. I sometimes hear it said that there is nothing dramatic about society in these days; but the Drama of the Son-in-law is appalling, to say nothing of our marriages, which have come to be very poor farces. I can explain how it all came about in the old vermicelli maker's case. I think I recollect that Foriot—"

"Goriot, madame."

"Yes, that Moriot was once President of his Section during the Revolution. He was in the secret of the famous scarcity of grain, and laid the foundation of his fortune in those days by selling flour for ten times its cost. He had as much flour as he wanted. My grandmother's steward sold him immense quantities. No doubt Noriot shared the plunder with the Committee of Public Salvation, as that sort of person always did. I recollect the steward telling my grandmother that she might live at Grandvilliers in complete security, because her corn was as good as a certificate of civism. Well, then, this Loriot, who sold corn to those butchers, has never had but one passion, they say—he idolizes his daughters. He settled one of them under Restaud's roof, and grafted the other into the Nucingen family tree, the Baron de Nucingen being a rich banker who had turned Royalist. You can quite understand that

so long as Bonaparte was Emperor, the two sons-in-law could manage to put up with the old Ninety-three; but after the restoration of the Bourbons, M. de Restaud felt bored by the old man's society, and the banker was still more tired of it. His daughters were still fond of him; they wanted 'to keep the goat and the cabbage,' so they used to see the Joriot whenever there was no one there, under pretence of affection. 'Come to-day, papa, we shall have you all to ourselves, and that will be much nicer!' and all that sort of thing. As for me, dear, I believe that love has second-sight: poor Ninety-three, his heart must have bled! He saw that his daughters were ashamed of him, that if they loved their husbands his visits must make mischief. So he immolated himself. He made the sacrifice because he was a father; he went into voluntary exile. His daughters were satisfied, so he thought that he had done the best thing he could; but it was a family crime, and father and daughters were accomplices. You see this sort of thing everywhere. What could this old Doriot have been but a splash of mud in his daughters' drawing-rooms? He would only have been in the way, and bored other people, besides being bored himself. And this that happened between father and daughters may happen to the prettiest woman in Paris and the man she loves the best; if her love grows tiresome, he will go; he will descend to the basest trickery to leave her. It is the same with all love and friendship. Our heart is a treasury; if you pour out all its wealth at once, you are bankrupt. We show no more mercy to the affection that reveals its utmost extent than we do to another kind of prodigal who has not a penny left. Their father had given them all he had. For twenty years he had given his whole heart to them; then, one day, he gave them all his fortune too. The lemon was squeezed; the girls left the rest in the gutter."

"The world is very base," said the Vicomtesse, plucking at the threads of her shawl. She did not raise her eyes as she spoke; the words that Mme. de Langeais had meant

for her in the course of the story had cut her to the quick.

"Base? Oh, no," answered the Duchess; "the world goes its own way, that is all. If I speak in this way, it is only to show that I am not duped by it. I think as you do," she said, pressing the Vicomtesse's hand. "The world is a slough; let us try to live on the heights above it."

She rose to her feet and kissed Mme. de Beauséant on the forehead as she said: "You look very charming to-day, dear. I have never seen such a lovely color in your cheeks before."

Then she went out with a slight inclination of the head to the cousin.

"Old Goriot is sublime!" said Eugène to himself, as he remembered how he had watched his neighbor work the silver vessel into a shapeless mass that night.

Mme. de Beauséant did not hear him; she was absorbed in her own thoughts. For several minutes the silence remained unbroken till the law student became almost paralyzed with embarrassment, and was equally afraid to go or stay or speak a word.

"The world is basely ungrateful and ill-natured," said the Vicomtesse at last. "No sooner does a trouble befall you than a friend is ready to bring the tidings and to probe your heart with the point of a dagger while calling on you to admire the handle. Epigrams and sarcasms already! Ah! I will defend myself!"

She raised her head like the great lady that she was, and lightnings flashed from her proud eyes.

"Ah!" she said, as she saw Eugène, "are you there?"

"Still," he said piteously.

"Well, then, M. de Rastignac, deal with the world as it deserves. You are determined to succeed? I will help you. You shall sound the depths of corruption in woman; you shall measure the extent of man's pitiful vanity. Deeply as I am versed in such learning, there were pages in the book

of life that I had not read. Now I know all. The more cold-blooded your calculations, the further you will go. Strike ruthlessly; you will be feared. Men and women for you must be nothing more than post-horses; take a fresh relay, and leave the last to drop by the roadside; in this way you will reach the goal of your ambition. You will be nothing here, you see, unless a woman interests herself in you; and she must be young and wealthy, and a woman of the world. Yet, if you have a heart, lock it carefully away like a treasure; do not let any one suspect it, or you will be lost; you would cease to be the executioner, you would take the victim's place. And if ever you should love, never let your secret escape you! trust no one until you are very sure of the heart to which you open your heart. Learn to mistrust every one; take every precaution for the sake of the love which does not exist as yet. Listen, Miguel"—the name slipped from her so naturally that she did not notice her mistake—"there is something still more appalling than the ingratitude of daughters who have cast off their old father and wish that he were dead, and that is a rivalry between two sisters. Restaud comes of a good family; his wife has been received into their circle; she has been presented at court; and her sister, her wealthy sister, Mme. Delphine de Nucingen, the wife of a great capitalist, is consumed with envy, and ready to die of spleen. There is a gulf set between the sisters—indeed, they are sisters no longer—the two women who refuse to acknowledge their father do not acknowledge each other. So Mme. de Nucingen would lap all the mud that lies between the Rue Saint-Lazare and the Rue de Grenelle to gain admittance to my salon. She fancied that she should gain her end through de Marsay; she has made herself de Marsay's slave, and she bores him. De Marsay cares very little about her. If you will introduce her to me, you will be her darling, her Benjamin; she will idolize you. If, after that, you can love her, do so; if not, make her useful. I will ask her to come once or twice to one of my great crushes, but I will never receive her here

in the morning. I will bow to her when I see her, and that will be quite sufficient. You have shut the Comtesse de Restaud's door against you by mentioning old Goriot's name. Yes, my good friend, you may call at her house twenty times, and every time out of the twenty you will find that she is not at home. The servants have their orders, and will not admit you. Very well, then, now let old Goriot gain the right of entry into her sister's house for you. The beautiful Mme. de Nucingen will give the signal for a battle. As soon as she singles you out, other women will begin to lose their heads about you, and her enemies and rivals and intimate friends will all try to take you from her. There are women who will fall in love with a man because another woman has chosen him; like the city madames, poor things, who copy our millinery, and hope thereby to acquire our manners. You will have a success, and in Paris success is everything; it is the key of power. If the women credit you with wit and talent, the men will follow suit so long as you do not undeceive them yourself. There will be nothing you may not aspire to; you will go everywhere, and you will find out what the world is—an assemblage of fools and knaves. But you must be neither the one nor the other. I am giving you my name like Ariadne's clew of thread to take with you into this labyrinth; make no unworthy use of it," she said, with a queenly glance and curve of her throat; "give it back to me unsullied. And now, go; leave me. We women also have our battles to fight."

"And if you should ever need some one who would gladly set a match to a train for you—"

"Well?" she asked.

He tapped his heart, smiled in answer to his cousin's smile, and went.

It was five o'clock, and Eugène was hungry; he was afraid lest he should not be in time for dinner, a misgiving which made him feel that it was pleasant to be borne so quickly across Paris. This sensation of physical comfort left his mind free to grapple with the thoughts that assailed

him. A mortification usually sends a young man of his age into a furious rage; he shakes his fists at society, and vows vengeance when his belief in himself is shaken. Just then Rastignac was overwhelmed by the words, "You have shut the Countess's door against you."

"I shall call!" he said to himself, "and if Mme. de Beauséant is right, if I never find her at home—I . . . well, Mme. de Restaud shall meet me in every salon in Paris. I will learn to fence, and have some pistol practice, and kill that Maxime of hers!"

"And money?" cried an inward monitor. "How about money, where is that to come from?" And all at once the wealth displayed in the Comtesse de Restaud's drawing-room rose before his eyes. That was the luxury which Goriot's daughter had loved too well; the gilding, the ostentatious splendor, the unintelligent luxury of the parvenu, the riotous extravagance of a courtesan. Then the attractive vision suddenly went under an eclipse as he remembered the stately grandeur of the Hotel de Beauséant. As his fancy wandered among these lofty regions in the great world of Paris, innumerable dark thoughts gathered in his heart; his ideas widened, and his conscience grew more elastic. He saw the world as it is; saw how the rich lived beyond the jurisdiction of law and public opinion, and found in success the *ultima ratio mundi*.

"Vautrin is right, success is virtue!" he said to himself.

Arrived in the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Genève, he rushed up to his room for ten francs wherewith to satisfy the demands of the cabman, and went in to dinner. He glanced round the squalid room, saw the eighteen poverty-stricken creatures about to feed like cattle in their stalls, and the sight filled him with loathing. The transition was too sudden, and the contrast was so violent that it could not but act as a powerful stimulant; his ambition developed and grew beyond all bounds. On the one hand, he beheld a vision of social life in its most charming and refined forms, of

quick-pulsed youth, of fair, impassioned faces invested with all the charm of poetry, framed in a marvellous setting of luxury or art; and, on the other hand, he saw a sombre picture, the miry verge beyond these faces, in which passion was extinct and nothing was left of the drama but the cords and pulleys and bare mechanism. Mme. de Beauséant's counsels, the words uttered in anger by the forsaken lady, her petulant offer, came to his mind, and poverty was a ready expositor. Rastignac determined to open two parallel trenches, so as to insure success; he would be a learned doctor of law and a man of fashion. Clearly he was still a child! Those two lines are asymptotes, and will never meet.

"You are very dull, my lord Marquis," said Vautrin, with one of the shrewd glances that seem to read the innermost secrets of another mind.

"I am not in the humor to stand jokes from people who call me 'my lord Marquis,'" answered Eugène. "A marquis here in Paris, if he is not the veriest sham, ought to have a hundred thousand livres a year at least; and a lodger in the Maison Vauquer is not exactly Fortune's favorite."

Vautrin's glance at Rastignac was half-paternal, half-contemptuous. "Puppy!" it seemed to say; "I should make one mouthful of him!" Then he answered:

"You are in a bad humor; perhaps your visit to the beautiful Comtesse de Restaud was not a success."

"She has shut her door against me because I told her that her father dined at our table," cried Rastignac.

Glances were exchanged all round the room; old Goriot looked down.

"You have sent some snuff into my eye," he said to his neighbor, turning a little aside to rub his hand over his face.

"Any one who molests Father Goriot will have henceforward to reckon with me," said Eugène, looking at the old man's neighbor; "he is worth all the rest of us put together. —I am not speaking of the ladies," he added, turning in the direction of Mlle. Taillefer.

Eugène's remarks produced a sensation, and his tone si-

lenced the dinner-table. Vautrin alone spoke. "If you are going to champion Father Goriot, and set up for his responsible editor into the bargain, you had need be a crack shot and know how to handle the foils," he said, banteringly.

"So I intend," said Eugène.

"Then are you taking the field to-day?"

"Perhaps," Rastignac answered. "But I owe no account of myself to any one, especially as I do not try to find out what other people do of a night."

Vautrin looked askance at Rastignac.

"If you do not mean to be deceived by the puppets, my boy, you must go behind and see the whole show, and not peep through holes in the curtain. That is enough," he added, seeing that Eugène was about to fly into a passion. "We can have a little talk whenever you like."

There was a general feeling of gloom and constraint. Old Goriot was so deeply dejected by the student's remark that he did not notice the change in the disposition of his fellow-lodgers, nor know that he had met with a champion capable of putting an end to the persecution.

"Then, M. Goriot sitting there is the father of a countess," said Mme. Vauquer in a low voice.

"And of a baroness," answered Rastignac.

"That is about all he is capable of," said Bianchon to Rastignac; "I have taken a look at his head; there is only one bump—the bump of Paternity; he must be an *eternal father*."

Eugène was too intent on his thoughts to laugh at Bianchon's joke. He determined to profit by Mme. de Beauséant's counsels, and was asking himself how he could obtain the necessary money. He grew grave. The wide savannas of the world stretched before his eyes; all things lay before him, nothing was his. Dinner came to an end, the others went, and he was left in the dining-room.

"So you have seen my daughter?" Goriot spoke tremulously, and the sound of his voice broke in upon Eugène's

dreams. The young man took the elder's hand, and looked at him with something like kindness in his eyes.

"You are a good and noble man," he said. "We will have some talk about your daughters by and by."

He rose without waiting for Goriot's answer, and went to his room. There he wrote the following letter to his mother:

"MY DEAR MOTHER—Can you nourish your child from your breast again? I am in a position to make a rapid fortune, but I want twelve hundred francs—I must have them at all costs. Say nothing about this to my father; perhaps he might make objections, and unless I have the money, I may be led to put an end to myself, and so escape the clutches of despair. I will tell you everything when I see you. I will not begin to try to describe my present situation; it would take volumes to put the whole story clearly and fully. I have not been gambling, my kind mother, I owe no one a penny; but if you would preserve the life that you gave me, you must send me the sum I mention. As a matter of fact, I go to see the Vicomtesse de Beauséant; she is using her influence for me; I am obliged to go into society, and I have not a penny to lay out on clean gloves. I can manage to exist on bread and water, or go without food, if need be, but I cannot do without the tools with which they cultivate the vineyards in this country. I must resolutely make up my mind at once to make my way, or stick in the mire for the rest of my days. I know that all your hopes are set on me, and I want to realize them quickly. Sell some of your old jewelry, my kind mother; I will give you other jewels very soon. I know enough of our affairs at home to know all that such a sacrifice means, and you must not think that I would lightly ask you to make it; I should be a monster if I could. You must think of my entreaty as a cry forced from me by imperative necessity. Our whole future lies in the subsidy with which I must begin my first campaign, for life in Paris is one continual battle. If you cannot otherwise procure the whole of the money, and are forced to sell our

aunt's lace, tell her that I will send her some still handsomer," and so forth.

He wrote to ask each of his sisters for their savings—would they despoil themselves for him, and keep the sacrifice a secret from the family? To his request he knew that they would not fail to respond gladly, and he added to it an appeal to their delicacy by touching the chord of honor that vibrates so loudly in young and highly-strung natures.

Yet when he had written the letters, he could not help feeling misgivings in spite of his youthful ambition; his heart beat fast, and he trembled. He knew the spotless nobleness of the lives buried away in the lonely manor house; he knew what trouble and what joy his request would cause his sisters, and how happy they would be as they talked at the bottom of the orchard of that dear brother of theirs in Paris. Visions rose before his eyes; a sudden strong light revealed his sisters secretly counting over their little store, devising some girlish stratagem by which the money could be sent to him *incognito*, essaying, for the first time in their lives, a piece of deceit that reached the sublime in its unselfishness.

"A sister's heart is a diamond for purity, a deep sea of tenderness!" he said to himself. He felt ashamed of those letters.

What power there must be in the petitions put up by such hearts; how pure the fervor that bears their souls to Heaven in prayer! What exquisite joy they would find in self-sacrifice! What a pang for his mother's heart if she could not send him all that he asked for! And this noble affection, these sacrifices made at such terrible cost, were to serve as the ladder by which he meant to climb to Delphine de Nucingen. A few tears, like the last grains of incense flung upon the sacred altar fire of the hearth, fell from his eyes. He walked up and down, and despair mingled with his emotion. Old Goriot saw him through the half-open door.

"What is the matter, sir?" he asked from the threshold.

"Ah! my good neighbor, I am as much a son and brother as you are a father. You do well to fear for the Comtesse Anastasie; there is one M. Maxime de Trailles, who will be her ruin."

Old Goriot withdrew, stammering some words, but Eugène failed to catch their meaning.

The next morning Rastignac went out to post his letters. Up to the last moment he wavered and doubted, but he ended by flinging them into the box. "I shall succeed!" he said to himself. So says the gambler; so says the great captain; but the three words that have been the salvation of some few have been the ruin of many more.

A few days after this Eugène called at Mme. de Restaud's house; she was not at home. Three times he tried the experiment, and three times he found her doors closed against him, though he was careful to choose an hour when M. de Trailles was not there. The Vicomtesse was right.

The student studied no longer. He put in an appearance at lectures simply to answer to his name, and after thus attesting his presence, departed forthwith. He had been through a reasoning process familiar to most students. He had seen the advisability of deferring his studies to the last moment before going up for his examinations; he made up his mind to cram his second and third year's work into the third year, when he meant to begin to work in earnest, and to complete his studies in law with one great effort. In the meantime he had fifteen months in which to navigate the ocean of Paris, to spread the nets and set the lines that should bring him a protectress and a fortune. Twice during that week he saw Mme. de Beauséant; he did not go to her house until he had seen the Marquis d'Ajuda drive away.

Victory for yet a few more days was with the great lady, the most poetic figure in the Faubourg Saint-Germain; and the marriage of the Marquis d'Ajuda-Pinto with Mlle. de Rochefide was postponed. The dread of losing her happiness filled those days with a fever of joy unknown before, but the end was only so much the nearer. The Marquis

d'Ajuda and the Rochefides agreed that this quarrel and reconciliation was a very fortunate thing; Mme. de Beau-séant (so they hoped) would gradually become reconciled to the idea of the marriage, and in the end would be brought to sacrifice d'Ajuda's morning visits to the exigencies of a man's career, exigencies which she must have foreseen. In spite of the most solemn promises, daily renewed, M. d'Ajuda was playing a part, and the Vicomtesse was eager to be deceived. "Instead of taking the leap heroically from the window, she is falling headlong down the staircase," said her most intimate friend, the Duchesse de Langeais. Yet this after-glow of happiness lasted long enough for the Vicomtesse to be of service to her young cousin. She had a half-superstitious affection for him. Eugène had shown her sympathy and devotion at a crisis when a woman sees no pity, no real comfort in any eyes; when, if a man is ready with soothing flatteries, it is because he has an interested motive.

Rastignac made up his mind that he must learn the whole of Goriot's previous history; he would come to his bearings before attempting to board the *Maison de Nucingen*. The results of his inquiries may be given briefly as follows:

In the days before the Revolution, Jean-Joachim Goriot was simply a workman in the employ of a vermicelli maker. He was a skilful, thrifty workman, sufficiently enterprising to buy his master's business when the latter fell a chance victim to the disturbances of 1789. Goriot established himself in the Rue de la Jussienne, close to the Corn Exchange. His plain good sense led him to accept the position of President of the Section, so as to secure for his business the protection of those in power at that dangerous epoch. This prudent step had led to success; the foundations of his fortune were laid in the time of the Scarcity (real or artificial), when the price of grain of all kinds rose enormously in Paris. People used to fight for bread at the bakers' doors; while other persons went to the grocers' shops and bought Italian paste foods without brawling over it. It was during this

year that Goriot made the money, which, at a later time, was to give him all the advantage of the great capitalist over the small buyer; he had, moreover, the usual luck of average ability; his mediocrity was the salvation of him. He excited no one's envy; it was not even suspected that he was rich till the peril of being rich was over, and all his intelligence was concentrated, not on political, but on commercial speculations. Goriot was an authority second to none on all questions relating to corn, flour, and "middlings"; and the production, storage, and quality of grain. He could estimate the yield of the harvest, and foresee market prices; he bought his cereals in Sicily, and imported Russian wheat. Any one who had heard him hold forth on the regulations that control the importation and exportation of grain, who had seen his grasp of the subject, his clear insight into the principles involved, his appreciation of weak points in the way that the system worked, would have thought that here was the stuff of which a minister is made. Patient, active, and persevering, energetic and prompt in action, he surveyed his business horizon with an eagle's eye. Nothing there took him by surprise; he foresaw all things, knew all that was happening, and kept his own counsel; he was a diplomatist in his quick comprehension of a situation; and in the routine of business he was as patient and plodding as a soldier on the march. But beyond this business horizon he could not see. He used to spend his hours of leisure on the threshold of his shop, leaning against the framework of the door. Take him from his dark little counting-house, and he became once more the rough, slow-witted workman, a man who cannot understand a piece of reasoning, who is indifferent to all intellectual pleasures, and falls asleep at the play, a Parisian Dolibom in short, against whose stupidity other minds are powerless.

Natures of this kind are nearly all alike; in almost all of them you will find some hidden depth of sublime affection. Two all-absorbing affections filled the vermicelli maker's heart to the exclusion of every other feeling; into them

he seemed to put all the forces of his nature, as he put the whole power of his brain into the corn trade. He had regarded his wife, the only daughter of a rich farmer of La Brie, with a devout admiration; his love for her had been boundless. Goriot had felt the charm of a lovely and sensitive nature, which, in its delicate strength, was the very opposite of his own. Is there any instinct more deeply implanted in the heart of man than the pride of protection, a protection which is constantly exerted for a fragile and defenceless creature? Join love thereto, the warmth of gratitude that all generous souls feel for the source of their pleasures, and you have the explanation of many strange incongruities in human nature.

After seven years of unclouded happiness, Goriot lost his wife. It was very unfortunate for him. She was beginning to gain an ascendancy over him in other ways; possibly she might have brought that barren soil under cultivation, she might have widened his ideas and given other directions to his thoughts. But when she was dead, the instinct of fatherhood developed in him till it almost became a mania. All the affection balked by death seemed to turn to his daughters, and he found full satisfaction for his heart in loving them. More or less brilliant proposals were made to him from time to time; wealthy merchants or farmers with daughters vied with each other in offering inducements to him to marry again; but he determined to remain a widower. His father-in-law, the only man for whom he felt a decided friendship, gave out that Goriot had made a vow to be faithful to his wife's memory. The frequenters of the Corn Exchange, who could not comprehend this sublime piece of folly, joked about it among themselves, and found a ridiculous nickname for him. One of them ventured (after a glass over a bargain) to call him by it, and a blow from the vermicelli maker's fist sent him headlong into a gutter in the Rue Oblin. He could think of nothing else when his children were concerned; his love for them made him fidgety and anxious; and this was so well known that one day a competitor, who wished to get

rid of him to secure the field to himself, told Goriot that Delphine had just been knocked down by a cab. The vermicelli maker turned ghastly pale, left the Exchange at once, and did not return for several days afterward; he was ill in consequence of the shock and the subsequent relief on discovering that it was a false alarm. This time, however, the offender did not escape with a bruised shoulder; at a critical moment in the man's affairs, Goriot drove him into bankruptcy, and forced him to disappear from the Corn Exchange.

As might have been expected, the two girls were spoiled. With an income of sixty thousand francs, Goriot scarcely spent twelve hundred on himself, and found all his happiness in satisfying the whims of the two girls. The best masters were engaged, that Anastasie and Delphine might be endowed with all the accomplishments which distinguish a good education. They had a chaperon—luckily for them, she was a woman who had sense and good taste; they learned to ride; they had a carriage for their use; they lived as the mistress of a rich old lord might live; they had only to express a wish, their father would hasten to give them their most extravagant desires, and asked nothing of them in return but a kiss. Goriot had raised the two girls to the level of the angels; and, quite naturally, he himself was left beneath them. Poor man! he loved them even for the pain that they gave him.

When the girls were old enough to be married, they were left free to choose for themselves. Each had half her father's fortune as her dowry; and when the Comte de Restaud came to woo Anastasie for her beauty, her social aspirations led her to leave her father's house for a more exalted sphere. Delphine wished for money; she married Nucingen, a banker of German extraction, who became a Baron of the Holy Roman Empire. Goriot remained a vermicelli maker as before. His daughters and his sons-in-law began to demur; they did not like to see him still engaged in trade, though his whole life was bound up with his business. For five years he stood out against their entreaties, then he yielded, and consented

to retire on the amount realized by the sale of his business and the savings of the last few years. It was this capital that Mme. Vauquer, in the early days of his residence with her, had calculated would bring in eight or ten thousand livres in a year. He had taken refuge in her lodging-house, driven there by despair when he knew that his daughters were compelled by their husbands not only to refuse to receive him as an inmate in their houses, but even to see him no more except in private.

This was all the information which Rastignac gained from a M. Muret who had purchased Goriot's business, information which confirmed the Duchesse de Langeais's suppositions, and herewith the preliminary explanation of this obscure but terrible Parisian tragedy comes to an end.

Toward the end of the first week in December Rastignac received two letters—one from his mother, and one from his elder sister. His heart beat fast, half with happiness, half with fear, at the sight of the familiar handwriting. Those two little scraps of paper contained life or death for his hopes. But while he felt a shiver of dread as he remembered their dire poverty at home, he knew their love for him so well that he could not help fearing that he was draining their very life-blood. His mother's letter ran as follows:

"MY DEAR CHILD—I am sending you the money that you asked for. Make a good use of it. Even to save your life I could not raise so large a sum a second time without your father's knowlege, and there would be trouble about it. We should be obliged to mortgage the land. It is impossible to judge of the merits of schemes of which I am ignorant; but what sort of schemes can they be, that you should fear to tell me about them? Volumes of explanation would not have been needed; we mothers can understand at a word, and that word would have spared me the anguish of uncertainty. I do not know how to hide the painful impression that your letter has made upon me, my dear son. What can you have

felt when you were moved to send this chill of dread through my heart? It must have been very painful to you to write the letter that gave me so much pain as I read it. To what courses are you committed? You are going to appear to be something that you are not, and your whole life and success depends upon this? You are about to see a society into which you cannot enter without rushing into expense that you cannot afford, without losing precious time that is needed for your studies? Ah! my dear Eugène, believe your mother, crooked ways cannot lead to great ends. Patience and endurance are the two qualities most needed in your position. I am not scolding you; I do not want any tinge of bitterness to spoil our offering. I am only talking like a mother whose trust in you is as great as her foresight for you. You know the steps that you must take, and I, for my part, know your purity of heart, and how good your intentions are; so I can say to you without a doubt, 'Go forward, beloved!' If I tremble, it is because I am a mother, but my prayers and blessings will be with you at every step. Be very careful, dear boy. You must have a man's prudence, for it lies with you to shape the destinies of five others who are dear to you, and must look to you. Yes, our fortunes depend upon you, and your success is ours. We all pray to God to be with you in all that you do. Your aunt Marcillac has been most generous beyond words in this matter; she saw at once how it was, even down to your gloves. 'But I have a weakness for the eldest!' she said gayly. You must love your aunt very much, dear Eugène. I shall wait till you have succeeded before telling you all that she has done for you, or her money would burn your fingers. You, who are young, do not know what it is to part with something that is a piece of your past! But what would we not sacrifice for your sake? Your aunt says that I am to send you a kiss on the forehead from her, and that kiss is to bring you luck again and again, she says. She would have written to you herself, the dear kind-hearted woman, but she is troubled with the gout in her fingers just now. Your father is very well. The

vintage of 1819 has turned out better than we expected. Good-by, dear boy; I will say nothing about your sisters, because Laure is writing to you, and I must let her have the pleasure of giving you all the home news. Heaven send that you may succeed! Oh! yes, dear Eugène, you must succeed. I have come, through you, to a knowledge of a pain so sharp that I do not think I could endure it a second time. I have come to know what it is to be poor, and to long for money for my children's sake. There, good-by! Do not leave us for long without news of you; and here, at the last, take a kiss from your mother."

By the time Eugène had finished the letter he was in tears. He thought of Father Goriot crushing his silver keep-sake into a shapeless mass before he sold it to meet his daughter's bill of exchange.

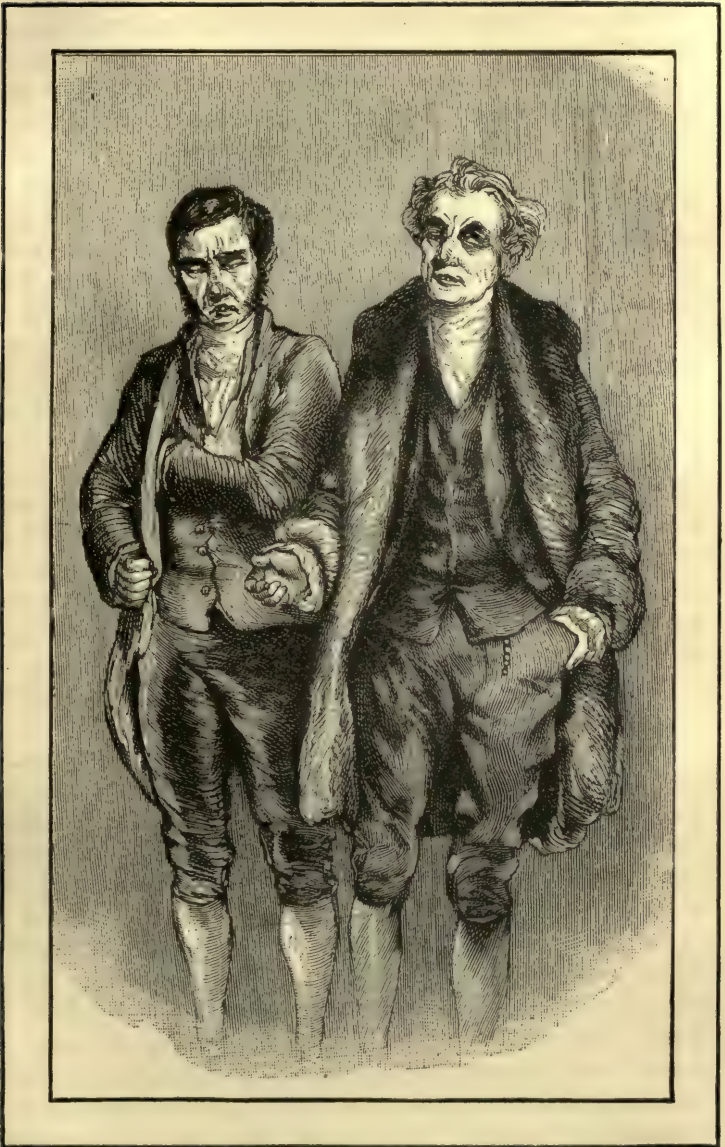
"Your mother has broken up her jewels for you," he said to himself; "your aunt shed tears over those relics of hers before she sold them for your sake. What right have you to heap execrations on Anastasie? You have followed her example; you have selfishly sacrificed others to your own future, and she sacrifices her father to her lover; and of you two, which is the worse?"

He was ready to renounce his attempts; he could not bear to take that money. The fires of remorse burned in his heart, and gave him intolerable pain, the generous secret remorse which men seldom take into account when they sit in judgment upon their fellow-men; but perhaps the angels in heaven, beholding it, pardon the criminal whom our justice condemns. Rastignac opened his sister's letter; its simplicity and kindness revived his heart.

"Your letter came just at the right time, dear brother. Agathe and I had thought of so many different ways of spending our money, that we did not know what to buy with it; and now you have come in, and, like the servant who upset all the watches that belonged to the King of

Spain, you have restored harmony; for, really and truly, we did not know which of all the things we wanted we wanted most, and we were always quarrelling about it, never thinking, dear Eugène, of a way of spending our money which would satisfy us completely. Agathe jumped for joy. Indeed, we have been like two mad things all day, 'to such a prodigious degree' (as aunt would say), that mother said, with her severe expression, 'Whatever can be the matter with you, mesdemoiselles?' I think if we had been scolded a little we should have been still better pleased. A woman ought to be very glad to suffer for one she loves! I, however, in my inmost soul, was doleful and cross in the midst of all my joy. I shall make a bad wife, I am afraid, I am too fond of spending. I had bought two sashes and a nice little stiletto for piercing eyelet-holes in my stays, trifles that I really did not want, so that I have less than that slow-coach Agathe, who is so economical and hoards her money like a magpie. She had two hundred francs! And I have only one hundred and fifty! I am nicely punished; I could throw my sash down the well; it will be painful to me to wear it now. Poor dear, I have robbed you. And Agathe was so nice about it. She said, 'Let us send the three hundred and fifty francs in our two names!' But I could not help telling you everything just as it happened.

"Do you know how we managed to keep your commandments? We took our glittering hoard, we went out for a walk, and when once fairly on the highway we ran all the way to Ruffec, where we handed over the coin, without more ado, to M. Grimbart of the Messageries Royales. We came back again like swallows on the wing. 'Don't you think that happiness has made us lighter?' Agathe said. We said all sorts of things, which I shall not tell you, Monsieur le Parisien, because they were all about you. Oh, we love you dearly, dear brother; it was all summed up in those few words. As for keeping the secret, little masqueraders like us are capable of anything (according to our aunt), even of holding our tongues. Our mother has been on a mysterious



VAUTRIN IN TWO OF HIS DISGUISES

journey to Angoulême, and the aunt went with her, not without solemn councils, from which we were shut out, and M. le Baron likewise. They are silent as to the weighty political considerations that prompted their mission, and conjectures are rife in the State of Rastignac. The Infantas are embroidering a muslin robe with open-work sprigs for her Majesty the Queen; the work progresses in the most profound secrecy. There be but two more breadths to finish. A decree has gone forth that no wall shall be built on the side of Verteuil, but that a hedge shall be planted instead thereof. Our subjects may sustain some disappointment of fruit and espaliers, but strangers will enjoy a fair prospect. Should the heir-presumptive lack pocket-handkerchiefs, be it known unto him that the dowager Lady of Marillac, exploring the recesses of her drawers and boxes (known respectively as Pompeii and Herculaneum), having brought to light a fair piece of cambric whereof she wotted not, the Princesses Agathe and Laure place at their brother's disposal their thread, their needles, and hands somewhat of the reddest. The two young Princes, Don Henri and Don Gabriel, retain their fatal habits of stuffing themselves with grape-jelly, of teasing their sisters, of taking their pleasure by going a-bird-nesting, and of cutting switches for themselves from the osier-beds, maugre the laws of the realm. Moreover, they list not to learn naught, wherefore the Papal Nuncio (called of the commonalty, M. le Curé) threateneth them with excommunication, since that they neglect the sacred canons of grammatical construction for the construction of other cannon, deadly engines made of the stems of elder.

"Farewell, dear brother, never did letter carry so many wishes for your success, so much love fully satisfied. You will have a great deal to tell us when you come home! You will tell me everything, won't you? I am the oldest. From something the aunt let fall, we think you must have had some success.

" 'Something was said of a lady, but nothing more was said. . . . '

"Of course not, in our family! Oh, by the by, Eugène, would you rather that we made that piece of cambric into shirts for you instead of pocket-handkerchiefs? If you want some really nice shirts at once, we ought to lose no time in beginning upon them; and if the fashion is different now in Paris, send us one for a pattern; we want more particularly to know about the cuffs. Good-by! good-by! Take my kiss on the left side of your forehead, on the temple that belongs to me, and to no one else in the world. I am leaving the other side of the sheet for Agathe, who has solemnly promised not to read a word that I have written; but, all the same, I mean to sit by her while she writes, so as to be quite sure that she keeps her word.—Your loving sister,

"LAURE DE RASTIGNAC."

"Yes!" said Eugène to himself. "Yes! Success at all costs now! Riches could not repay such devotion as this. I wish I could give them every sort of happiness! Fifteen hundred and fifty francs," he went on after a pause. "Every shot must go to the mark! Laure is right. Trust a woman! I have only calico shirts. Where some one else's welfare is concerned, a young girl becomes as ingenious as a thief. Guileless where she herself is in question, and full of foresight for me—she is like a heavenly angel forgiving the strange incomprehensible sins of earth."

The world lay before him. His tailor had been summoned and sounded, and had finally surrendered. When Rastignac met M. de Trailles, he had seen at once how great a part the tailor plays in a young man's career; a tailor is either a deadly enemy or a stanch friend, with an invoice for a bond of friendship; between these two extremes there is, alack! no middle term. In this representative of his craft Eugène discovered a man who understood that his was a sort of paternal function for young men at their entrance into life, who regarded himself as a stepping-stone between a young man's present and future. And Rastignac in gratitude made the man's fortune by an epigram of a kind in which he

excelled at a later period of his life. "I have twice known a pair of trousers turned out by him make a match of twenty thousand livres a year!"

Fifteen hundred francs, and as many suits of clothes as he chose to order! At that moment the poor child of the South felt no more doubts of any kind. The young man went down to breakfast with the indefinable air which the consciousness of the possession of money gives to youth. No sooner are the coins slipped into a student's pocket than his wealth, in imagination at least, is piled into a fantastic column, which affords him a moral support. He begins to hold up his head as he walks; he is conscious that he has a means of bringing his powers to bear on a given point; he looks you straight in the face; his gestures are quick and decided; only yesterday he was diffident and shy, any one might have pushed him aside; to-morrow, he will take the wall of a prime minister. A miracle has been wrought in him. Nothing is beyond the reach of his ambition, and his ambition soars at random; he is light-hearted, generous, and enthusiastic; in short, the fledgling bird has discovered that he has wings. A poor student snatches at every chance pleasure much as a dog runs all sorts of risks to steal a bone, cracking it and sucking the marrow as he flies from pursuit; but a young man who can rattle a few runaway gold coins in his pocket can take his pleasure deliberately, can taste the whole of the sweets of secure possession; he soars far above earth; he has forgotten what the word *poverty* means; all Paris is his. Those are days when the whole world shines radiant with light, when everything glows and sparkles before the eyes of youth, days that bring joyous energy that is never brought into harness, days of debts and of painful fears that go hand in hand with every delight. Those who do not know the left bank of the Seine between the Rue Saint-Jacques and the Rue des Saints-Pères know nothing of life.

"Ah! if the women of Paris but knew," said Rastignac, as he devoured Mme. Vauquer's stewed pears (at five for a penny), "they would come here in search of a lover."

Just then a porter from the *Méssageries Royales* appeared at the door of the room; they had previously heard the bell ring as the wicket opened to admit him. The man asked for M. Eugène de Rastignac, holding out two bags for him to take, and a form of receipt for his signature. Vautrin's keen glance cut Eugène like a lash.

"Now you will be able to pay for those fencing lessons and go to the shooting-gallery," he said.

"Your ship has come in," said Mme. Vauquer, eying the bags.

Mlle. Michonneau did not dare to look at the money, for fear her eyes should betray her cupidity.

"You have a kind mother," said Mme. Couture.

"You have a kind mother, sir," echoed Poiret.

"Yes, mamma has been drained dry," said Vautrin, "and now you can have your fling, go into society, and fish for heiresses, and dance with countesses who have peach blossom in their hair. But take my advice, young man, and don't neglect your pistol practice."

Vautrin struck an attitude, as if he were facing an antagonist. Rastignac, meaning to give the porter a tip, felt in his pockets and found nothing. Vautrin flung down a franc piece on the table.

"Your credit is good," he remarked, eying the student, and Rastignac was forced to thank him, though, since the sharp encounter of wits at dinner that day, after Eugène came in from calling on Mme. de Beauséant, he had made up his mind that Vautrin was insufferable. For a week, in fact, they had both kept silence in each other's presence, and watched each other. The student tried in vain to account to himself for this attitude.

An idea, of course, gains in force by the energy with which it is expressed; it strikes where the brain sends it, by a law as mathematically exact as the law that determines the course of a shell from a mortar. The amount of impression it makes is not to be determined so exactly. Sometimes, in an impressible nature, the idea works havoc, but

there are, no less, natures so robustly protected, that this sort of projectile falls flat and harmless on skulls of triple brass, as cannon-shot against solid masonry; then there are flaccid and spongy-fibred natures into which ideas from without sink like spent bullets into the earthworks of a redoubt. Rastignac's head was something of the powder-magazine order; the least shock sufficed to bring about an explosion. He was too quick, too young, not to be readily accessible to ideas; and open to that subtle influence of thought and feeling in others which causes so many strange phenomena that make an impression upon us of which we are all unconscious at the time. Nothing escaped his mental vision; he was lynx-eyed; in him the mental powers of perception, which seem like duplicates of the senses, had the mysterious power of swift projection that astonishes us in intellects of a high order—slingers who are quick to detect the weak spot in any armor.

In the past month Eugène's good qualities and defects had rapidly developed with his character. Intercourse with the world and the endeavor to satisfy his growing desires had brought out his defects. But Rastignac came from the South side of the Loire, and had the good qualities of his countrymen. He had the impetuous courage of the South, that rushes to the attack of a difficulty, as well as the southern impatience of delay or suspense. These traits are held to be defects in the North; they made the fortune of Murat, but they likewise cut short his career. The moral would appear to be that when the dash and boldness of the South side of the Loire meets, in a southern temperament, with the guile of the North, the character is complete, and such a man will gain (and keep) the crown of Sweden.

Rastignac, therefore, could not stand the fire from Vautrin's batteries for long without discovering whether this was a friend or a foe. He felt as if this strange being was reading his inmost soul, and dissecting his feelings, while Vautrin himself was so close and secretive that he seemed to have something of the profound and unmoved serenity

of a sphinx, seeing and hearing all things and saying nothing. Eugène, conscious of that money in his pocket, grew rebellious.

"Be so good as to wait a moment," he said to Vautrin, as the latter rose, after slowly emptying his coffee-cup, sip by sip.

"What for?" inquired the older man, as he put on his large-brimmed hat and took up the sword-cane that he was wont to twirl like a man who will face three or four foot-pads without flinching.

"I will repay you in a minute," returned Eugène. He unsealed one of the bags as he spoke, counted out a hundred and forty francs, and pushed them toward Mme. Vauquer. "Short reckonings make good friends," he added, turning to the widow; "that clears our accounts till the end of the year. Can you give me change for a five-franc piece?"

"Good friends make short reckonings," echoed Poirêt, with a glance at Vautrin.

"Here is your franc," said Rastignac, holding out the coin to the sphinx in the black wig.

"Any one might think that you were afraid to owe me a trifle," exclaimed this latter, with a searching glance that seemed to read the young man's inmost thoughts; there was a satirical and cynical smile on Vautrin's face such as Eugène had seen scores of times already; every time he saw it, it exasperated him almost beyond endurance.

"Well . . . so I am," he answered. He held both the bags in his hand, and had risen to go up to his room.

Vautrin made as if he were going out through the sitting-room, and the student turned to go through the second door that opened into the square lobby at the foot of the staircase.

"Do you know, Monsieur le Marquis de Rastignacorama, that what you were saying just now was not exactly polite?" Vautrin remarked, as he rattled his sword-cane across the panels of the sitting-room door, and came up to the student.

Rastignac looked coolly at Vautrin, drew him to the foot of the staircase, and shut the dining-room door. They were standing in the little square lobby between the kitchen and the dining-room; the place was lighted by an iron-barred fanlight above a door that gave access into the garden. Sylvie came out of her kitchen, and Eugène chose that moment to say: "*Monsieur Vautrin*, I am not a marquis, and my name is not Rastignacorama."

"They will fight," said Mlle. Michonneau, in an indifferent tone.

"Fight!" echoed Poiret.

"Not they," replied Mme. Vauquer, lovingly fingering her pile of coins.

"But there they are under the lime-trees," cried Mlle. Victorine, who had risen so that she might see out into the garden. "Poor young man! he was in the right after all."

"We must go upstairs, my pet," said Mme. Couture; "it is no business of ours."

At the door, however, Mme. Couture and Victorine found their progress barred by the portly form of Sylvie the cook.

"Whatever can have happened?" she said. "M. Vautrin said to M. Eugène, 'Let us have an explanation!' then he took him by the arm, and there they are out among the artichokes."

Vautrin came in while she was speaking. "Mamma Vauquer," he said, smiling, "don't frighten yourself at all. I am only going to try my pistols under the lime-trees."

"Oh! monsieur," cried Victorine, clasping her hands as she spoke, "why do you want to kill M. Eugène?"

Vautrin stepped back a pace or two, and gazed at Victorine.

"Oh! this is something fresh!" he exclaimed in a bantering tone, that brought the color into the poor girl's face. "That young fellow yonder is very nice, isn't he?" he went on. "You have given me a notion, my pretty child; I will make you both happy."

Mme. Couture laid her hand on the arm of her ward, and drew the girl away, as she said in her ear:

"Why, Victorine, I cannot imagine what has come over you this morning."

"I don't want any shots fired in my garden," said Mme. Vauquer. "You will frighten the neighborhood and bring the police up here all in a moment."

"Come, keep cool, Mamma Vauquer," answered Vautrin. "There, there; it's all right; we will go to the shooting-gallery."

He went back to Rastignac, laying his hand familiarly on the young man's arm.

"When I have given you ocular demonstration of the fact that I can put a bullet through the ace on a card five times running at thirty-five paces," he said, "that won't take away your appetite, I suppose? You look to me to be inclined to be a trifle quarrelsome this morning, and as if you would rush on your death like a blockhead."

"Do you draw back?" asked Eugène.

"Don't try to raise my temperature," answered Vautrin; "it is not cold this morning. Let us go and sit over there," he added, pointing to the green-painted garden seats; "no one can overhear us. I want a little talk with you. You are not a bad sort of youngster, and I have no quarrel with you. I like you, take Tromp—(confound it!)—take Vautrin's word for it. What makes me like you? I will tell you by and by. Meantime, I can tell you that I know you as well as if I had made you myself, as I will prove to you in a minute. Put down your bags," he continued, pointing to the round table.

Rastignac deposited his money on the table, and sat down. He was consumed with curiosity, which the sudden change in the manner of the man before him had excited to the highest pitch. Here was a strange being who, a moment ago, had talked of killing him, and now posed as his protector.

"You would like to know who I really am, what I was,

and what I do now," Vautrin went on. "You want to know too much, youngster. Come! come! keep cool! You will hear more astonishing things than that. I have had my misfortunes. Just hear me out first, and you shall have your turn afterward. Here is my past in three words. Who am I? Vautrin. What do I do? Just what I please. Let us change the subject. You want to know my character. I am good-natured to those who do me a good turn, or to those whose hearts speak to mine. These last may do anything they like with me; they may bruise my shins, and I shall not tell them to 'mind what they are about'; but, *nom d'une pipe*, the devil himself is not an uglier customer than I can be if people annoy me, or if I don't happen to take to them; and you may just as well know at once that I think no more of killing a man than of that," and he spat before him as he spoke. "Only when it is absolutely necessary to do so, I do my best to kill him properly. I am what you call an artist. I have read Benvenuto Cellini's 'Memoirs,' such as you see me; and, what is more, in Italian! A fine-spirited fellow he was! From him I learned to follow the example set us by Providence, who strikes us down at random, and to admire the beautiful whenever and wherever it is found. And, setting other questions aside, is it not a glorious part to play, when you pit yourself against mankind, and the luck is on your side? I have thought a good deal about the constitution of your present social Dis-order. A duel is downright childish, my boy! utter nonsense and folly! When one of two living men must be got out of the way, none but an idiot would leave chance to decide which it is to be; and in a duel it is a toss-up—heads or tails—and there you are! Now I, for instance, can hit the ace in the middle of a card five times running, send one bullet after another through the same hole, and at thirty-five paces, moreover! With that little accomplishment you might think yourself certain of killing your man, mightn't you? Well, I have fired, at twenty paces, and missed, and the rogue who had never handled a pistol in his life—look

here!" (he unbuttoned his waistcoat and exposed his chest, covered, like a bear's back, with a shaggy fell; the student gave a startled shudder)—"he was a raw lad, but he made his mark on me," the extraordinary man went on, drawing Rastignac's fingers over a deep scar on his breast. "But that happened when I myself was a mere boy; I was one-and-twenty then (your age), and I had some beliefs left—in a woman's love, and in a pack of rubbish that you will be over head and ears in directly. You and I were to have fought just now, weren't we? You might have killed me. Suppose that I were put under the earth, where would you be? You would have to clear out of this, go to Switzerland, draw on papa's purse—and he has none too much in it as it is. I mean to open your eyes to your real position, that is what I am going to do; but I shall do it from the point of view of a man who, after studying the world very closely, sees that there are but two alternatives—stupid obedience or revolt. I obey nobody; is that clear? Now, do you know how much you will want at the pace you are going? A million; and promptly, too, or that little head of ours will be swaying to and fro in the drag-nets at Saint-Cloud, while we are gone to find out whether or no there is a Supreme Being. I will put you in the way of that million."

He stopped for a moment and looked at Eugène.

"Aha! you do not look so sourly at papa Vautrin now! At the mention of the million you look like a young girl when somebody has said, 'I will come for you this evening!' and she betakes herself to her toilet as a cat licks its whiskers over a saucer of milk. All right. Come, now, let us go into the question, young man; all between ourselves, you know. We have a papa and mamma down yonder, a great-aunt, two sisters (aged eighteen and seventeen), two young brothers (one fifteen, and the other ten), that is about the roll-call of the crew. The aunt brings up the two sisters; the curé comes and teaches the boys Latin. Boiled chest-nuts are oftener on the table than white bread. Papa makes

a suit of clothes last a long while; if mamma has a different dress winter and summer, it is about as much as she has; the sisters manage as best they can. I know all about it; I have lived in the South.

"That is how things are at home. They send you twelve hundred francs a year, and the whole property only brings in three thousand francs all told. We have a cook and a manservant; papa is a baron, and we must keep up appearances. Then we have our ambitions; we are connected with the Beauséants, and we go afoot through the streets; we want to be rich, and we have not a penny; we eat Mme. Vauquer's messes, and we like grand dinners in the Faubourg Saint-Germain; we sleep on a truckle-bed, and dream of a mansion! I do not blame you for wanting these things. It is not given to every one to have ambition, my little trump. What sort of men do the women run after? Men of ambition. Men of ambition have stronger frames, their blood is richer in iron, their hearts are warmer than those of ordinary men. Women feel that when their power is greatest they look their best, and that those are their happiest hours; they like power in men, and prefer the strongest even if it is a power that may be their own destruction. I am going to make an inventory of your desires in order to put the question at issue before you. Here it is:

"We are as hungry as a wolf, and those newly-cut teeth of ours are sharp; what are we to do to keep the pot boiling? In the first place, we have the Code to browse upon; it is not amusing, and we are none the wiser for it, but that cannot be helped. So far so good. We mean to make an advocate of ourselves with a prospect of one day being made President of a Court of Assize, when we shall send poor devils, our betters, to the galleys with a T.F.¹ on their shoulders, so that the rich may be convinced that they can sleep in peace. There is no fun in that; and you are a long while coming to it; for, to begin with, there are two years of nauseous drudg-

¹ *Travaux forcés.*

ery in Paris, we see all the lollipops that we long for out of our reach. It is tiresome to want things and never to have them. If you were a pallid creature of the mollusk order, you would have nothing to fear, but it is different when you have the hot blood of a lion and are ready to get into a score of scrapes every day of your life. This is the ghastliest form of torture known in this inferno of God's making, and you will give in to it. Or suppose that you are a good boy, drink nothing stronger than milk, and bemoan your hard lot; you, with your generous nature, will endure hardships that would drive a dog mad, and make a start, after long waiting, as deputy to some rascal or other in a hole of a place where the Government will fling you a thousand francs a year like the scraps that are thrown to the butcher's dog. Bark at thieves, plead the cause of the rich, send men of heart to the guillotine, that is your work! Many thanks! If you have no influence, you may rot in your provincial tribunal. At thirty you will be a Justice with twelve hundred francs a year (if you have not flung off the gown for good before then). By the time you are forty you may look to marry a miller's daughter, an heiress with some six thousand livres a year. Much obliged! If you have influence, you may possibly be Public Prosecutor by the time you are thirty; with a salary of a thousand crowns, you could look to marry the mayor's daughter. Some petty piece of political trickery, such as mistaking Villèle for Manuel in a bulletin (the names rhyme, and that quiets your conscience), and you will probably be Procureur-Général by the time you are forty, with a chance of becoming a deputy. Please to observe, my dear boy, that our conscience will have been a little damaged in the process, and that we shall endure twenty years of drudgery and hidden poverty, and that our sisters are wearing Dian's livery. I have the honor to call your attention to another fact; to wit, that there are but twenty Procureurs-Généraux at a time in all France, while there are some twenty thousand of you young men who aspire to that elevated position; that there are some mountebanks among you

who would sell their family to screw their fortunes a peg higher. If this sort of thing sickens you, try another course. The Baron de Rastignac thinks of becoming an advocate, does he? There's a nice prospect for you! Ten years of drudgery straight away. You are obliged to live at the rate of a thousand francs a month; you must have a library of law books, live in chambers, go into society, go down on your knees to ask a solicitor for briefs, lick the dust off the floor of the Palais de Justice. If this kind of business led to anything, I should not say no; but just give me the names of five advocates here in Paris who by the time that they are fifty are making fifty thousand francs a year! Bah! I would sooner turn pirate on the high seas than have my soul shrivel up inside me like that. How will you find the capital? There is but one way, marry a woman who has money. There is no fun in it. Have you a mind to marry? You hang a stone round your neck; for if you marry for money, what becomes of our exalted notions of honor and so forth? You might as well fly in the face of social conventions at once. Is it nothing to crawl like a serpent before your wife, to lick her mother's feet, to descend to dirty actions that would sicken swine—faugh!—never mind if you at least make your fortune. But you will be as doleful as a drip-stone if you marry for money. It is better to wrestle with men than to wrangle at home with your wife. You are at the crossway of the roads of life, my boy; choose your way.

“But you have chosen already. You have gone to see your cousin of Beauséant, and you have had an inkling of luxury; you have been to Mme. de Restaud's house, and in Father Goriot's daughter you have seen a glimpse of the Parisienne for the first time. That day you came back with a word written upon your forehead. I knew it, I could read it—‘*Success!*’ Yes, success at any price. ‘Bravo,’ said I to myself, ‘here is the sort of fellow for me.’ You wanted money. Where was it to come from? You have drained your sisters' little hoards (all brothers sponge more or less on their sisters). Those fifteen hundred francs of yours (got

together, God knows how! in a country where there are more chestnuts than five-franc pieces) will slip away like soldiers after pillage. And, then, what will you do? Shall you begin to work? Work, or what you understand by work at this moment, means, for a man of Poiret's calibre, an old age in Mamma Vauquer's lodging-house. There are fifty thousand young men in your position at this moment, all bent as you are on solving one and the same problem—how to acquire a fortune rapidly. You are but a unit in that aggregate. You can guess, therefore, what efforts you must make, how desperate the struggle is. There are not fifty thousand good positions for you; you must fight and devour one another like spiders in a pot. Do you know how a man makes his way here? By brilliant genius or by skilful corruption. You must either cut your way through these masses of men like a cannon ball, or steal among them like a plague. Honesty is nothing to the purpose. Men bow before the power of genius; they hate it, and try to slander it, because genius does not divide the spoil; but if genius persists, they bow before it. To sum it all up in a phrase, if they fail to smother genius in the mud, they fall on their knees and worship it. Corruption is a great power in the world, and talent is scarce. So corruption is the weapon of superfluous mediocrity; you will be made to feel the point of it everywhere. You will see women who spend more than ten thousand francs a year on dress, while their husband's salary (his whole income) is six thousand francs. You will see officials buying estates on twelve hundred francs a year. You will see women who sell themselves body and soul to drive in a carriage belonging to the son of a peer of France, who has a right to drive in the middle rank at Longchamp. You have seen that poor simpleton of a Goriot obliged to meet a bill with his daughter's name at the back of it, though her husband has fifty thousand francs a year. I defy you to walk a couple of yards anywhere in Paris without stumbling on some infernal complication. I'll bet my head to a head of that salad that you will stir up a

hornet's nest by taking a fancy to the first young, rich, and pretty woman you meet. They are all dodging the law, all at logger-heads with their husbands. If I were to begin to tell you all that vanity or necessity (virtue is not often mixed up in it, you may be sure), all that vanity and necessity drive them to do for lovers, finery, housekeeping, or children, I should never come to an end. So an honest man is the common enemy.

"But do you know what an honest man is? Here, in Paris, an honest man is the man who keeps his own counsel, and will not divide the plunder. I am not speaking now of those poor bond-slaves who do the work of the world without a reward for their toil—God Almighty's outcasts, I call them. Among them, I grant you, is virtue in all the flower of its stupidity, but poverty is no less their portion. At this moment, I think I see the long faces those good folk would pull if God played a practical joke on them and stayed away at the Last Judgment.

"Well, then, if you mean to make a fortune quickly, you must either be rich to begin with, or make people believe that you are rich. It is no use playing here except for high stakes; once take to low play, it is all up with you. If in the scores of professions that are open to you, there are ten men who rise very rapidly, people are sure to call them thieves. You can draw your own conclusions. Such is life. It is no cleaner than a kitchen; it reeks like a kitchen; and if you mean to cook your dinner, you must expect to soil your hands; the real art is in getting them clean again, and therein lies the whole morality of our epoch. If I take this tone in speaking of the world to you, I have the right to do so; I know it well. Do you think that I am blaming it? Far from it; the world has always been as it is now. Moralists' strictures will never change it. Mankind are not perfect, but one age is more or less hypocritical than another, and then simpletons say that its morality is high or low. I do not think that the rich are any worse than the poor; man is much the same, high or low, or wherever he

is. In a million of these human cattle there may be half a score of bold spirits who rise above the rest, above the laws; I am one of them. And you, if you are cleverer than your fellows, make straight to your end, and hold your head high. But you must lay your account with envy and slander and mediocrity, and every man's hand will be against you. Napoleon met with a Minister of War, Aubry by name, who all but sent him to the colonies.

"Feel your pulse. Think whether you can get up morning after morning, strengthened in yesterday's purpose. In that case I will make you an offer that no one would decline. Listen attentively. You see, I have an idea of my own. My idea is to live a patriarchal life on a vast estate, say a hundred thousand acres, somewhere in the Southern States of America. I mean to be a planter, to have slaves, to make a few snug millions by selling my cattle, timber, and tobacco; I want to live an absolute monarch, and to do just as I please; to lead such a life as no one here in these squalid dens of lath and plaster ever imagines. I am a great poet; I do not write my poems, I feel them, and act them. At this moment I have fifty thousand francs, which might possibly buy forty negroes. I want two hundred thousand francs, because I want to have two hundred negroes to carry out my notions of the patriarchal life properly. Negroes, you see, are like a sort of family ready grown, and there are no inquisitive public prosecutors out there to interfere with you. That investment in ebony ought to mean three or four million francs in ten years' time. If I am successful, no one will ask me who I am. I shall be Mr. Four Millions, an American citizen. I shall be fifty years old by then, and sound and hearty still; I shall enjoy life after my own fashion. In two words, if I find you an heiress with a million, will you give me two hundred thousand francs? Twenty per cent commission, eh? Is that too much? Your little wife will be very much in love with you. Once married, you will show signs of uneasiness and remorse; for a couple of weeks you will be depressed. Then, some night after

sundry grimacings, comes the confession, between two kisses, 'Two hundred thousand francs of debts, my darling!' This sort of farce is played every day in Paris, and by young men of the highest fashion. When a young wife has given her heart, she will not refuse her purse. Perhaps you are thinking that you will lose the money for good? Not you. You will make two hundred thousand francs again by some stroke of business. With your capital and your brains you should be able to accumulate as large a fortune as you could wish. *Ergo*, in six months you will have made your own fortune, and your old friend Vautrin's, and made an amiable woman very happy, to say nothing of your people at home, who must blow on their fingers to warm them, in the winter, for lack of firewood. You need not be surprised at my proposal, nor at the demand I make. Forty-seven out of every sixty great matches here in Paris are made after just such a bargain as this. The Chamber of Notaries compels my gentleman to—'

"What must I do?" said Rastignac, eagerly interrupting Vautrin's speech.

"Next to nothing," returned the other, with a slight involuntary movement, the suppressed exultation of the angler when he feels a bite at the end of his line. "Follow me carefully! The heart of a girl whose life is wretched and unhappy is a sponge that will thirstily absorb love; a dry sponge that swells at the first drop of sentiment. If you pay court to a young girl whose existence is a compound of loneliness, despair, and poverty, and who has no suspicion that she will come into a fortune, good Lord! it is quint and quatorze at piquet; it is knowing the numbers of the lottery beforehand; it is speculating in the funds when you have news from a sure source; it is building up a marriage on an indestructible foundation. The girl may come in for millions, and she will fling them, as if they were so many pebbles, at your feet. 'Take it, my beloved! Take it, Alfred, Adolphe, Eugène!' or whoever it was that showed his sense by sacrificing himself for her. And as for sacrificing him-

self, this is how I understand it. You sell a coat that is getting shabby, so that you can take her to the *Cadran bleu*, treat her to mushrooms on toast, and then go to the *Amigu-Comique* in the evening; you pawn your watch to buy her a shawl. I need not remind you of the fiddle-faddle sentimentality that goes down so well with all women; you spill a few drops of water on your stationery, for instance; those are the tears you shed while far away from her. You look to me as if you were perfectly acquainted with the argot of the heart. Paris, you see, is like a forest in the New World, where you have to deal with a score of varieties of savages—Illinois and Hurons, who live on the proceeds of their social hunting. You are a hunter of millions; you set your snares; you use lures and nets; there are many ways of hunting. Some hunt heiresses, others a legacy; some fish for souls, yet others sell their clients, bound hand and foot. Every one who comes back from the chase with his game-bag well filled meets with a warm welcome in good society. In justice to this hospitable part of the world, it must be said that you have to do with the most easy and good-natured of great cities. If the proud aristocracies of the rest of Europe refuse admittance among their ranks to a disreputable millionaire, Paris stretches out a hand to him, goes to his banquets, eats his dinners, and hobnobs with his infamy."

"But where is such a girl to be found?" asked Eugène.

"Under your eyes; she is yours already."

"Mlle. Victorine?"

"Precisely."

"And what was that you said?"

"She is in love with you already, your little *Baronne de Rastignac*!"

"She has not a penny," Eugène continued, much mystified.

"Ah! now we are coming to it! Just another word or two, and it will all be clear enough. Her father, *Taillefer*, is an old scoundrel; it is said that he murdered one of his friends at the time of the Revolution. He is one of your

comedians that sets up to have opinions of his own. He is a banker—senior partner in the house of Frédéric Taillefer and Company. He has one son, and means to leave all he has to the boy, to the prejudice of Victorine. For my part, I don't like to see injustice of this sort. I am like Don Quixote, I have a fancy for defending the weak against the strong. If it should please God to take that youth away from him, Taillefer would have only his daughter left; he would want to leave his money to some one or other; an absurd notion, but it is only human nature, and he is not likely to have any more children, as I know. Victorine is gentle and amiable; she will soon twist her father round her fingers, and set his head spinning like a German top by plying him with sentiment! She will be too much touched by your devotion to forget you; you will marry her. I mean to play Providence for you, and Providence is to do my will. I have a friend whom I have attached closely to myself, a colonel in the Army of the Loire, who has just been transferred into the *garde royale*. He has taken my advice and turned ultra-royalist; he is not one of those fools who never change their opinions. Of all pieces of advice, my cherub, I would give you this—don't stick to your opinions any more than to your words. If any one asks you for them, let him have them—at a price. A man who prides himself on going in a straight line through life is an idiot who believes in infallibility. There are no such things as principles; there are only events, and there are no laws but those of expediency: a man of talent accepts events and the circumstances in which he finds himself, and turns everything to his own ends. If laws and principles were fixed and invariable, nations would not change them as readily as we change our shirts. The individual is not obliged to be more particular than the nation. A man whose services to France have been of the very slightest is a fetich looked on with superstitious awe because he has always seen everything in red; but he is good, at the most, to be put into the Museum of Arts and Crafts, among the automatic machines, and labelled La Fay-

ette; while the prince at whom everybody flings a stone, the man who despises humanity so much that he spits as many oaths as he is asked for in the face of humanity, saved France from being torn in pieces at the Congress of Vienna; and they who should have given him laurels fling mud at him. Oh! I know something of affairs, I can tell you; I have the secrets of many men! Enough. When I find three minds in agreement as to the application of a principle, I shall have a fixed and immovable opinion—I shall have to wait a long while first. In the Tribunals you will not find three judges of the same opinion on a single point of law. To return to the man I was telling you of. He would crucify Jesus Christ again, if I bade him. At a word from his old chum Vautrin he will pick a quarrel with a scamp that will not send so much as five francs to his sister, poor girl, and”—(here Vautrin rose to his feet and stood like a fencing-master about to lunge)—“turn him off into the dark!” he added.

“How frightful!” said Eugène. “You do not really mean it? M. Vautrin, you are joking!”

“There! there! Keep cool!” said the other. “Don’t behave like a baby. But if you find any amusement in it, be indignant, flare up! Say that I am a scoundrel, a rascal, a rogue, a bandit; but do not call me a blackleg nor a spy! There, out with it, fire away! I forgive you; it is quite natural at your age. I was like that myself once. Only remember this, you will do worse things yourself some day. You will flirt with some pretty woman and take her money. You have thought of that, of course,” said Vautrin, “for how are you to succeed unless love is laid under contribution? There are no two ways about virtue, my dear student; it either is, or it is not. Talk of doing penance for your sins! It is a nice system of business, when you pay for your crime by an act of contrition! You seduce a woman that you may set your foot on such and such a rung of the social ladder; you sow dissension among the children of a family; you descend, in short, to every base action that can be com-

mitted at home or abroad, to gain your own ends for your own pleasure or your profit; and can you imagine that these are acts of faith, hope, or charity? How is it that a dandy, who in a night has robbed a boy of half his fortune, gets only a couple of months in prison; while a poor devil who steals a banknote for a thousand francs, with aggravating circumstances, is condemned to penal servitude? Those are your laws. Not a single provision but lands you in some absurdity. That man with yellow gloves and a golden tongue commits many a murder; he sheds no blood, but he drains his victim's veins as surely; a desperado forces open a door with a crowbar, dark deeds both of them! You yourself will do every one of the things that I suggest to you to-day, bar the bloodshed. Do you believe that there is any absolute standard in this world? Despise mankind and find out the meshes that you can slip through in the net of the Code. The secret of a great success for which you are at a loss to account is a crime that has never been found out, because it was properly executed."

"Silence, sir! I will not hear any more; you make me doubt myself. At this moment my sentiments are all my science."

"Just as you please, my fine fellow; I did not think you were so weak-minded," said Vautrin; "I shall say no more about it. One last word, however," and he looked hard at the student—"you have my secret," he said.

"A young man who refuses your offer knows that he must forget it."

"Quite right, quite right; I am glad to hear you say so. Somebody else might not be so scrupulous, you see. Keep in mind what I want to do for you. I will give you a fortnight. The offer is still open."

"What a head of iron the man has!" said Eugène to himself as he watched Vautrin walk unconcernedly away with his cane under his arm. "Yet Mme. de Beauséant said as much more gracefully; he has only stated the case in cruder language. He would tear my heart with claws of steel."

What made me think of going to Mme. de Nucingen? He guessed my motives before I knew them myself. To sum it up, that outlaw has told me more about virtue than all I have learned from men and books. If virtue admits of no compromises, I have certainly robbed my sisters," he said, throwing down the bags on the table.

He sat down again and fell, unconscious of his surroundings, into deep thought.

"To be faithful to an ideal of virtue! A heroic martyrdom! Pshaw! every one believes in virtue, but who is virtuous? Nations have made an idol of Liberty, but what nation on the face of the earth is free? My youth is still like a blue and cloudless sky. If I set myself to obtain wealth or power, does it not mean that I must make up my mind to lie, and fawn, and cringe, and swagger, and flatter, and dissemble? To consent to be the servant of others who have likewise fawned and lied and flattered? Must I cringe to them before I can hope to be their accomplice? Well, then, I decline. I mean to work nobly and with a single heart. I will work day and night; I will owe my fortune to nothing but my own exertions. It may be the slowest of all roads to success, but I shall lay my head on the pillow at night untroubled by evil thoughts. Is there a greater or a better thing than this—to look back over your life and know that it is stainless as a lily? I and my life are like a young man and his betrothed. Vautrin has put before me all that comes after ten years of marriage. The devil! my head is swimming. I do not want to think at all; the heart is a sure guide."

Eugène was roused from his musings by the voice of the stout Sylvie, who announced that the tailor had come, and Eugène therefore made his appearance before the man with the two money bags, and was not ill pleased that it should be so. When he had tried on his dress suit, he put on his new morning costume, which completely metamorphosed him.

"I am quite equal to M. de Trailles," he said to himself. "In short, I look like a gentleman."

"You asked me, sir, if I knew the houses where Mme. de Nucingen goes," old Goriot's voice spoke from the doorway of Eugène's room.

"Yes."

"Very well then, she is going to the Maréchal Carigliano's ball on Monday. If you can manage to be there, I shall hear from you whether my two girls enjoyed themselves, and how they were dressed, and all about it in fact."

"How did you find that out, my good Goriot?" said Eugène, putting a chair by the fire for his visitor.

"Her maid told me. I hear all about their doings from Thérèse and Constance," he added gleefully.

The old man looked like a lover who is still young enough to be made happy by the discovery of some little stratagem which brings him information of his lady-love without her knowledge.

"You will see them both!" he said, giving artless expression to a pang of jealousy.

"I do not know," answered Eugène. "I will go to Mme. de Beauséant and ask her for an introduction to the Maréchale."

Eugène felt a thrill of pleasure at the thought of appearing before the Vicomtesse, dressed as henceforward he always meant to be. The "abysses of the human heart," in the moralists' phrase, are only insidious thoughts, involuntary promptings of personal interest. The instinct of enjoyment turns the scale; those rapid changes of purpose which have furnished the text for so much rhetoric are calculations prompted by the hope of pleasure. Rastignac, beholding himself well dressed and impeccable as to gloves and boots, forgot his virtuous resolutions. Youth, moreover, when bent upon wrong-doing does not dare to behold itself in the mirror of consciousness; mature age has seen itself; and therein lies the whole difference between these two phases of life.

A friendship between Eugène and his neighbor, old Goriot, had been growing up for several days past. This secret friendship and the antipathy that the student had

begun to entertain for Vautrin arose from the same psychological causes. The bold philosopher who shall investigate the effects of mental action upon the physical world will doubtless find more than one proof of the material nature of our sentiments in the relations which they create between human beings and other animals. What physiognomist is as quick to discern character as a dog is to discover from a stranger's face whether this is a friend or no? Those by-words—"atoms," "affinities"—are facts surviving in modern languages for the confusion of philosophic wiseacres who amuse themselves by winnowing the chaff of language to find its grammatical roots. We *feel* that we are loved. Our sentiments make themselves felt in everything, even at a great distance. A letter is a living soul, and so faithful an echo of the voice that speaks in it, that finer natures look upon a letter as one of love's most precious treasures. Old Goriot's affection was of the instinctive order, a canine affection raised to a sublime pitch; he had scented compassion in the air, and the kindly respect and youthful sympathy in the student's heart. This friendship had, however, scarcely reached the stage at which confidences are made. Though Eugène had spoken of his wish to meet Mme. de Nucingen, it was not because he counted on the old man to introduce him to her house, for he hoped that his own audacity might stand him in good stead. All that old Goriot had said as yet about his daughters had referred to the remarks that the student had made so freely in public on that day of the two visits.

"How could you think that Mme. de Restaud bore you a grudge for mentioning my name?" he had said on the day following that scene at dinner. "My daughters are very fond of me; I am a happy father; but my sons-in-law have behaved badly to me, and rather than make trouble between my darlings and their husbands I choose to see my daughters secretly. Fathers who can see their daughters at any time have no idea of all the pleasure that this mystery gives me; I cannot always see mine when I wish, do you

understand? So when it is fine I walk out in the Champs-Élysées, after finding out from their waiting-maids whether my daughters mean to go out. I wait near the entrance; my heart beats fast when the carriages begin to come; I admire them in their dresses, and as they pass they give me a little smile, and it seems as if everything was lighted up for me by a ray of bright sunlight. I wait, for they always go back the same way, and then I see them again; the fresh air has done them good and brought color into their cheeks; all about me people say, 'What a beautiful woman that is!' and it does my heart good to hear them.

"Are they not my own flesh and blood? I love the very horses that draw them; I envy the little lap-dog on their knees. Their happiness is my life. Every one loves after his own fashion, and mine does no one any harm; why should people trouble their heads about me? I am happy in my own way. Is there any law against my going to see my girls in the evening when they are going out to a ball? And what a disappointment it is when I get there too late, and am told that 'Madame has gone out!' Once I waited till three o'clock in the morning for Nasie; I had not seen her for two whole days. I was so pleased, that it was almost too much for me! Please do not speak of me unless it is to say how good my daughters are to me. They are always wanting to heap presents upon me, but I will not have it. 'Just keep your money,' I tell them. 'What should I do with it? I want nothing.' And what am I, sir, after all? An old carcass, whose soul is always where my daughters are. When you have seen Mme. de Nucingen, tell me which you like the most," said the old man after a moment's pause, while Eugène put the last touches to his toilet. The student was about to go out to walk in the Garden of the Tuileries until the hour when he could venture to appear in Mme. de Beauséant's drawing-room.

That walk was a turning-point in Eugène's career. Several women noticed him; he looked so handsome, so young, and so well dressed. This almost admiring attention gave a

new turn to his thoughts. He forgot his sisters and the aunt who had robbed herself for him; he no longer remembered his own virtuous scruples. He had seen hovering above his head the fiend so easy to mistake for an angel, the Devil with rainbow wings, who scatters rubies, and aims his golden shafts at palace fronts, who invests women with purple, and thrones with a glory that dazzles the eyes of fools till they forget the simple origins of royal dominion; he had heard the rustle of that Vanity whose tinsel seems to us to be the symbol of power. However cynical Vautrin's words had been, they had made an impression on his mind, as the sordid features of the old crone who whispers, "A lover, and gold in torrents," remain engraven on a young girl's memory.

Eugène lounged about the walks till it was nearly five o'clock, then he went to Mme. de Beauséant, and received one of the terrible blows against which young hearts are defenceless. Hitherto the Vicomtesse had received him with the kindly urbanity, the bland grace of manner that is the result of fine breeding, but is only complete when it comes from the heart.

To-day Mme. de Beauséant bowed constrainedly, and spoke curtly:

"M. de Rastignac, I cannot possibly see you, at least not at this moment. I am engaged . . ."

An observer, and Rastignac instantly became an observer, could read the whole history, the character and customs of caste, in the phrase, in the tones of her voice, in her glance and bearing. He caught a glimpse of the iron hand beneath the velvet glove—the personality, the egoism beneath the manner, the wood beneath the varnish. In short, he heard that unmistakable *I THE KING* that issues from the plumed canopy of the throne, and finds its last echo under the crest of the simplest gentleman.

Eugène had trusted too implicitly to the generosity of a woman; he could not believe in her haughtiness. Like all the unfortunate, he had subscribed, in all good faith, the generous compact which should bind the benefactor to

the recipient, and the first article in that bond, between two large-hearted natures, is a perfect equality. The kindness which knits two souls together is as rare, as divine, and as little understood as the passion of love, for both love and kindness are the lavish generosity of noble natures. Rastignac was set upon going to the Duchesse de Carigliano's ball, so he swallowed down this rebuff.

"Madame," he faltered out, "I would not have come to trouble you about a trifling matter; be so kind as to permit me to see you later, I can wait."

"Very well, come and dine with me," she said, a little confused by the harsh way in which she had spoken, for this lady was as genuinely kind-hearted as she was high-born.

Eugène was touched by this sudden relenting, but none the less he said to himself as he went away, "Crawl in the dust, put up with every kind of treatment. What must the rest of the world be like when one of the kindest of women forgets all her promises of befriending me in a moment, and tosses me aside like an old shoe? So it is every one for himself? It is true that her house is not a shop, and I have put myself in the wrong by needing her help. You should cut your way through the world like a cannon-ball, as Vautrin said."

But the student's bitter thoughts were soon dissipated by the pleasure which he promised himself in this dinner with the Vicomtesse. Fate seemed to determine that the smallest accidents in his life should combine to urge him into a career which the terrible sphinx of the Maison Vauquer had described as a field of battle where you must either slay or be slain, and cheat to avoid being cheated. You leave your conscience and your heart at the barriers, and wear a mask on entering into this game of grim earnest, where, as in ancient Sparta, you must snatch your prize without being detected if you would deserve the crown.

On his return he found the Vicomtesse gracious and kindly, as she had always been to him. They went together to the dining-room, where the Vicomte was waiting

for his wife. In the time of the Restoration the luxury of the table was carried, as is well known, to the highest degree, and M. de Beauséant, like many jaded men of the world, had few pleasures left but those of good cheer; in this matter, in fact, he was a gourmand of the schools of Louis XVIII. and of the Duc d'Escars, and luxury was supplemented by splendor. Eugène, dining for the first time in a house where the traditions of grandeur had descended through many generations, had never seen any spectacle like this that now met his eyes. In the time of the Empire, balls had always ended with a supper, because the officers who took part in them must be fortified for immediate service, and even in Paris might be called upon to leave the ballroom for the battlefield. This arrangement had gone out of fashion under the Monarchy, and Eugène had so far only been asked to dances. The self-possession which pre-eminently distinguished him in later life already stood him in good stead, and he did not betray his amazement. Yet as he saw for the first time the finely wrought silver plate, the completeness of every detail, the sumptuous dinner, noiselessly served, it was difficult for such an ardent imagination not to prefer this life of studied and refined luxury to the hardships of the life which he had chosen only that morning.

His thoughts went back for a moment to the lodging-house, and, with a feeling of profound loathing, he vowed to himself that at New Year he would go; prompted at least as much by a desire to live among cleaner surroundings as by a wish to shake off Vautrin, whose huge hand he seemed to feel on his shoulder at that moment. When you consider the numberless forms, clamorous or mute, that corruption takes in Paris, common-sense begins to wonder what mental aberration prompted the State to establish great colleges and schools there, and assemble young men in the capital; how it is that pretty women are respected, or that the gold coin displayed in the money-changer's wooden saucers does not take to itself wings in the twinkling of an eye; and when

you come to think further, how comparatively few cases of crime there are, and to count up the misdemeanors committed by youth, is there not a certain amount of respect due to these patient Tantaluses who wrestle with themselves and nearly always come off victorious? The struggles of the poor student in Paris, if skilfully drawn, would furnish a most dramatic picture of modern civilization.

In vain Mme. de Beauséant looked at Eugène as if asking him to speak; the student was tongue-tied in the Vicomte's presence.

"Are you going to take me to the Italiens this evening?" the Vicomtesse asked her husband.

"You cannot doubt that I should obey you with pleasure," he answered, and there was a sarcastic tinge in his politeness which Eugène did not detect, "but I ought to go to meet some one at the Variétés."

"His mistress," said she to herself.

"Then, is not Ajuda coming for you this evening?" inquired the Vicomte.

"No," she answered, petulantly.

"Very well, then, if you really must have an arm, take that of M. de Rastignac."

The Vicomtesse turned to Eugène with a smile.

"That would be a very compromising step for you," she said.

"'A Frenchman loves danger, because in danger there is glory,' to quote M. de Chateaubriand," said Rastignac, with a bow.

A few moments later he was sitting beside Mme. de Beauséant in a brougham, that whirled them through the streets of Paris to a fashionable theatre. It seemed to him that some fairy magic had suddenly transported him into a box facing the stage. All the lorgnettes of the house were pointed at him as he entered, and at the Vicomtesse in her charming toilet. He went from enchantment to enchantment.

"You must talk to me, you know," said Mme. de Beau-

séant. "Ah! look! There is Mme. de Nucingen in the third box from ours. Her sister and M. de Trailles are on the other side."

The Vicomtesse glanced as she spoke at the box where Mlle. de Rochefide should have been; M. d'Ajuda was not there, and Mme. de Beauséant's face lighted up in a marvelous way.

"She is charming," said Eugène, after looking at Mme. de Nucingen.

"She has white eyelashes."

"Yes, but she has such a pretty slender figure!"

"Her hands are large."

"Such beautiful eyes!"

"Her face is long."

"Yes, but length gives distinction."

"It is lucky for her that she has some distinction in her face. Just see how she fidgets with her opera-glass! The Goriot blood shows itself in every movement," said the Vicomtesse, much to Eugène's astonishment.

Indeed, Mme. de Beauséant seemed to be engaged in making a survey of the house, and to be unconscious of Mme. Nucingen's existence; but no movement made by the latter was lost upon the Vicomtesse. The house was full of the loveliest women in Paris, so that Delphine de Nucingen was not a little flattered to receive the undivided attention of Mme. de Beauséant's young, handsome, and well-dressed cousin, who seemed to have no eyes for any one else.

"If you look at her so persistently, you will make people talk, M. de Rastignac. You will never succeed if you fling yourself at any one's head like that."

"My dear cousin," said Eugène, "you have protected me indeed so far, and now if you would complete your work, I only ask of you a favor which will cost you but little, and be of very great service to me. I have lost my heart."

"Already?"

"Yes."

"And to that woman!"

"How could I aspire to find any one else to listen to me?" he asked, with a keen glance at his cousin. "Her Grace the Duchesse de Carigliano is a friend of the Duchesse de Berri," he went on, after a pause; "you are sure to see her, will you be so kind as to present me to her, and to take me with you to her ball on Monday? I shall meet Mme. de Nucingen there, and enter upon my first skirmish."

"Willingly," she said. "If you have a liking for her already, your affairs of the heart are like to prosper. That is de Marsay over there in the Princesse Galathionne's box. Mme. de Nucingen is racked with jealousy. There is no better time for approaching a woman, especially if she happens to be a banker's wife. All those ladies of the Chaussée-d'Antin love revenge."

"Then, what would you do yourself in such a case?"

"I should suffer in silence."

At this point the Marquis d'Ajuda appeared in Mme. de Beauséant's box.

"I have made a muddle of my affairs to come to you," he said, "and I am telling you about it, so that it may not be a sacrifice."

Eugène saw the glow of joy on the Vicomtesse's face, and knew that this was love, and learned the difference between love and the affectations of Parisian coquetry. He admired his cousin, grew mute, and yielded his place to M. d'Ajuda with a sigh.

"How noble, how sublime a woman is when she loves like that!" he said to himself. "And *he* could forsake her for a doll! Oh! how could any one forsake her?"

There was a boy's passionate indignation in his heart. He could have flung himself at Mme. de Beauséant's feet; he longed for the power of the devil if he could snatch her away and hide her in his heart, as an eagle snatches up some white yearling from the plains and bears it to his eyry. It was humiliating to him to think that in all this gallery of fair pictures he had not one picture of his own. "To have a mistress and an almost royal position is a sign of power,"

he said to himself. And he looked at Mme. de Nucingen as a man measures another who has insulted him.

The Vicomtesse turned to him, and the expression of her eyes thanked him a thousand times for his discretion. The first act came to an end just then.

"Do you know Mme. de Nucingen well enough to present M. de Rastignac to her?" she asked of the Marquis d'Ajuda.

"She will be delighted," said the Marquis. The handsome Portuguese rose as he spoke and took the student's arm, and in another moment Eugène found himself in Mme. de Nucingen's box.

"Madame," said the Marquis, "I have the honor of presenting to you the Chevalier Eugène de Rastignac; he is a cousin of Mme. de Beauséant's. You have made so deep an impression upon him that I thought I would fill up the measure of his happiness by bringing him nearer to his divinity."

Words spoken half jestingly to cover their somewhat disrespectful import; but such an implication, if carefully disguised, never gives offence to a woman. Mme. de Nucingen smiled, and offered Eugène the place which her husband had just left.

"I do not venture to suggest that you should stay with me, Monsieur," she said. "Those who are so fortunate as to be in Mme. de Beauséant's company do not desire to leave it."

"Madame," Eugène said, lowering his voice, "I think that to please my cousin I should remain with you.—Before my lord Marquis came we were speaking of you and of your exceedingly distinguished appearance," he added aloud.

M. d'Ajuda turned and left them.

"Are you really going to stay with me, Monsieur?" asked the Baroness. "Then we shall make each other's acquaintance. Mme. de Restaud told me about you, and has made me anxious to meet you."

"She must be very insincere, then, for she has shut her door on me."

"What?"

"Madame, I will tell you honestly the reason why; but I must crave your indulgence before confiding such a secret to you. I am your father's neighbor; I had no idea that Mme. de Restaud was his daughter. I was rash enough to mention his name; I meant no harm, but I annoyed your sister and her husband very much. You cannot think how severely the Duchesse de Langeais and my cousin blamed this apostasy on a daughter's part, as a piece of bad taste. I told them all about it, and they both burst out laughing. Then Mme. de Beauséant made some comparison between you and your sister, speaking in high terms of you, and saying how very fond you were of my neighbor, M. Goriot. And, indeed, how could you help loving him? He adores you so passionately that I am jealous already. We talked about you this morning for two hours. So this evening I was quite full of all that your father had told me, and while I was dining with my cousin I said that you could not be as beautiful as affectionate. Mme. de Beauséant meant to gratify such warm admiration, I think, when she brought me here, telling me, in her gracious way, that I should see you."

"Then, even now, I owe you a debt of gratitude, Monsieur," said the banker's wife. "We shall be quite old friends in a little while."

"Although a friendship with you could not be like an ordinary friendship," said Rastignac; "I should never wish to be your friend."

Such stereotyped phrases as these, in the mouths of beginners, possess an unfailing charm for women, and are insipid only when read coldly; for a young man's tone, glance, and attitude give a surpassing eloquence to the banal phrases. Mme. de Nucingen thought that Rastignac was adorable. Then, woman-like, being at a loss how to reply to the student's outspoken admiration, she answered a previous remark.

"Yes, it is very wrong of my sister to treat our poor

father as she does," she said; "he has been a Providence to us. It was not until M. de Nucingen positively ordered me only to receive him in the mornings that I yielded the point. But I have been unhappy about it for a long while; I have shed many tears over it. This violence to my feelings, with my husband's brutal treatment, have been the two causes of my unhappy married life. There is certainly no woman in Paris whose lot seems more enviable than mine, and yet, in reality, there is not one so much to be pitied. You will think I must be out of my senses to talk to you like this; but you know my father, and I cannot regard you as a stranger."

"You will find no one," said Eugène, "who longs as eagerly as I do to be yours. What do all women seek? Happiness." (He answered his own question in low, vibrating tones.) "And if happiness for a woman means that she is to be loved and adored, to have a friend to whom she can pour out her wishes, her fancies, her sorrows and joys; to whom she can lay bare her heart and soul, and all her fair defects and her gracious virtues, without fear of a betrayal; believe me, the devotion and the warmth that never fails can only be found in the heart of a young man who, at a bare sign from you, would go to his death, who neither knows nor cares to know anything as yet of the world, because you will be all the world to him. I myself, you see (you will laugh at my simplicity), have just come from a remote country district; I am quite new to this world of Paris; I have only known true and loving hearts; and I made up my mind that here I should find no love. Then I chanced to meet my cousin, and to see my cousin's heart from very near; I have divined the inexhaustible treasures of passion, and, like Cherubino, I am the lover of all women, until the day comes when I find *the* woman to whom I may devote myself. As soon as I saw you, as soon as I came into the theatre this evening, I felt myself borne toward you as if by the current of a stream. I had so often thought of you already, but I had never dreamed that you would be so beautiful! Mme.

de Beauséant told me that I must not look so much at you. She does not know the charm of your red lips, your fair face, nor see how soft your eyes are. . . . I also am beginning to talk nonsense; but let me talk."

Nothing pleases women better than to listen to such whispered words as these; the most puritanical among them listens even when she ought not to reply to them; and Rastignac, having once begun, continued to pour out his story, dropping his voice, that she might lean and listen; and Mme. de Nucingen, smiling, glanced from time to time at de Marsay, who still sat in the Princesse Galathionne's box.

Rastignac did not leave Mme. de Nucingen till her husband came to take her home.

"Madame," Eugène said, "I shall have the pleasure of calling upon you before the Duchesse de Carigliano's ball."

"If Matame infites you to come," said the Baron, a thick-set Alsatian, with indications of a sinister cunning in his full-moon countenance, "you are quide sure of being well receifed."

"My affairs seem to be in a promising way," said Eugène to himself. "'Can you love me?' I asked her, and she did not resent it. The bit is in the horse's mouth, and I have only to mount and ride"; and with that he went to pay his respects to Mme. de Beauséant, who was leaving the theatre on d'Ajuda's arm.

The student did not know that the Baroness's thoughts had been wandering; that she was even then expecting a letter from de Marsay, one of those letters that bring about a rupture that rends the soul; so, happy in his delusion, Eugène went with the Vicomtesse to the peristyle, where people were waiting till their carriages were announced.

"That cousin of yours is hardly recognizable for the same man," said the Portuguese laughingly to the Vicomtesse, when Eugène had taken leave of them. "He will break the bank. He is as supple as an eel; he will go a long way, of

that I am sure. Who else could have picked out a woman for him, as you did, just when she needed consolation?"

"But it is not certain that she does not still love the faithless lover," said Mme. de Beauséant.

The student meanwhile walked back from the Théâtre-Italien to the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève, making the most delightful plans as he went. He had noticed how closely Mme. de Restaud had scrutinized him when he appeared in the Vicomtesse's box, and again when he sat beside Mme. de Nucingen, and inferred that the Countess's doors would not be closed in future. Four important houses were now open to him—for he meant to stand well with the Maréchale; he had four supporters in the inmost circle of society in Paris. Even now it was clear to him that, once involved in this intricate social machinery, he must attach himself to a spoke of the wheel that was to turn and raise his fortunes; he would not examine himself too curiously as to the methods, but he was certain of the end, and conscious of the power to gain and keep his hold.

"If Mme. de Nucingen takes an interest in me, I will teach her how to manage her husband. That husband of hers is a great speculator; he might put me in the way of making a fortune by a single stroke."

He did not say this bluntly in so many words; as yet, indeed, he was not sufficient of a diplomatist to sum up a situation, to see its possibilities at a glance, and calculate the chances in his favor. These were nothing but hazy ideas that floated over his mental horizon; they were less cynical than Vautrin's notions; but if they had been tried in the crucible of conscience, no very pure result would have issued from the test. It is by a succession of such like transactions that men sink at last to the level of the relaxed morality of this epoch, when there have never been so few of those who square their courses with their theories, so few of those noble characters who do not yield to temptation, for whom the slightest deviation from the line of rectitude is a crime. To these magnificent types of uncompromising Right we owe two

masterpieces—the *Alceste* of Molière, and, in our own day, the characters of Jeanie Deans and her father in Sir Walter Scott's novel. Perhaps a work which should chronicle the opposite course, which should trace out all the devious courses through which a man of the world, a man of ambitions, drags his conscience, just steering clear of crime that he may gain his end and yet save appearances, such a chronicle would be no less edifying and no less dramatic.

Rastignac went home. He was fascinated by Mme. de Nucingen; he seemed to see her before him, slender and graceful as a swallow. He recalled the intoxicating sweetness of her eyes, her fair hair, the delicate silken tissue of the skin, beneath which it almost seemed to him that he could see the blood coursing; the tones of her voice still exerted a spell over him; he had forgotten nothing; his walk perhaps heated his imagination by sending a glow of warmth through his veins. He knocked unceremoniously at Goriot's door.

"I have seen Mme. Delphine, neighbor," said he.

"Where?"

"At the Italiens."

"Did she enjoy it? . . . Just come inside," and the old man left his bed, unlocked the door, and promptly returned again.

It was the first time that Eugène had been in old Goriot's room, and he could not control his feeling of amazement at the contrast between the den in which the father lived and the costume of the daughter whom he had just beheld. The window was curtainless, the walls were damp, in places the varnished wall-paper had come away and gave glimpses of the grimy yellow plaster beneath. The wretched bed on which the old man lay boasted but one thin blanket, and a wadded quilt made out of large pieces of Mme. Vauquer's old dresses. The floor was damp and gritty. Opposite the window stood a chest of drawers made of rosewood, one of the old-fashioned kind with a curving front and brass handles, shaped like rings of twisted vine stems cov-

ered with flowers and leaves. On a venerable piece of furniture with a wooden shelf stood a ewer and basin and shaving apparatus. A pair of shoes stood in one corner; a night-table by the bed had neither a door nor marble slab. There was not a trace of a fire in the empty grate; the square walnut table with the cross-bar against which old Goriot had crushed and twisted his posset-dish stood near the hearth. The old man's hat was lying on a broken-down bureau. An armchair stuffed with straw and a couple of chairs completed the list of ramshackle furniture. From the tester of the bed, tied to the ceiling by a piece of rag, hung a strip of some cheap material in large red and black checks. No poor drudge in a garret could be worse lodged than old Goriot in Mme. Vauquer's lodging-house. The mere sight of the room sent a chill through you and a sense of oppression; it was like the worst cell in a prison. Luckily, Goriot could not see the effect that his surroundings produced on Eugène as the latter deposited his candle on the night-table. The old man turned round, keeping the bedclothes huddled up to his chin.

"Well," he said, "and which do you like the best, Mme. de Restaud or Mme. de Nucingen?"

"I like Mme. Delphine the best," said the law student, "because she loves you the best."

At the words so heartily spoken the old man's hand slipped out from under the bedclothes and grasped Eugène's.

"Thank you, thank you," he said, gratefully. "Then what did she say about me?"

The student repeated the Baroness's remarks with some embellishments of his own, the old man listening the while as though he heard a voice from Heaven.

"Dear child!" he said. "Yes, yes, she is very fond of me. But you must not believe all that she tells you about Anastasie. The two sisters are jealous of each other, you see, another proof of their affection. Mme. de Restaud is very fond of me too. I know she is. A father sees his children as God sees all of us; he looks into the very depths.

of their hearts; he knows their intentions; and both of them are so loving. Oh! if I only had good sons-in-law, I should be too happy, and I daresay there is no perfect happiness here below. If I might live with them—simply hear their voices, know that they are there, see them go and come as I used to do at home when they were still with me; why, my heart bounds at the thought. . . . Were they nicely dressed?"

"Yes," said Eugène. "But, M. Goriot, how is it that your daughters have such fine houses, while you live in such a den as this?"

"Dear me, why should I want anything better?" he replied, with seeming carelessness. "I can't quite explain to you how it is; I am not used to stringing words together properly, but it all lies there—" he said, tapping his heart. "My real life is in my two girls, you see; and so long as they are happy and smartly dressed, and have soft carpets under their feet, what does it matter what clothes I wear or where I lie down of a night? I shall never feel cold so long as they are warm; I shall never feel dull if they are laughing. I have no troubles but theirs. When you, too, are a father, and you hear your children's little voices, you will say to yourself, 'That has all come from me.' You will feel that those little ones are akin to every drop in your veins, that they are the very flower of your life (and what else are they?); you will cleave so closely to them that you seem to feel every movement that they make. Everywhere I hear their voices sounding in my ears. If they are sad, the look in their eyes freezes my blood. Some day you will find out that there is far more happiness in another's happiness than in your own. It is something that I cannot explain, something within that sends a glow of warmth all through you. In short, I live my life three times over. Shall I tell you something funny? Well, then, since I have been a father, I have come to understand God. He is everywhere in the world, because the whole world comes from Him. And it is just the same with my children, Monsieur. Only, I love my daughters better than God loves the world, for the world

is not so beautiful as God Himself is, but my children are more beautiful than I am. Their lives are so bound up with mine that I felt somehow that you would see them this evening. Great Heaven! If any man would make my little Delphine as happy as a wife is when she is loved, I would black his boots and run on his errands. That miserable M. de Marsay is a cur; I know all about him from her maid. A longing to wring his neck comes over me now and then. He does not love her! does not love a pearl of a woman, with a voice like a nightingale and shaped like a model. Where can her eyes have been when she married that great lump of an Alsatian? They ought both of them to have married young men, good-looking and good-tempered—but, after all, they had their own way.”

Father Goriot was sublime. Eugène had never yet seen his face light up as it did now with the passionate fervor of a father's love. It is worthy of remark that strong feeling has a very subtle and pervasive power; the roughest nature, in the endeavor to express a deep and sincere affection, communicates to others the influence that has put resonance into the voice, and eloquence into every gesture, wrought a change in the very features of the speaker; for under the inspiration of passion the stupidest human being attains to the highest eloquence of ideas, if not of language, and seems to move in some sphere of light. In the old man's tones and gesture there was something just then of the same spell that a great actor exerts over his audience. But does not the poet in us find expression in our affections?

“Well,” said Eugène, “perhaps you will not be sorry to hear that she is pretty sure to break with de Marsay before long. That sprig of fashion has left her for the Princesse Galathionne. For my own part, I fell in love with Mme. Delphine this evening.”

“Stuff!” said old Goriot.

“I did indeed, and she did not regard me with aversion. For a whole hour we talked of love, and I am to go to call on her on Saturday, the day after to-morrow.”

"Oh! how I should love you, if she should like you. You are kind-hearted; you would never make her miserable. If you were to forsake her, I would cut your throat at once. A woman does not love twice, you see! Good heavens! what nonsense I am talking, M. Eugène! It is cold; you ought not to stay here. *Mon Dieu!* so you have heard her speak? What message did she give you for me?"

"None at all," said Eugène to himself; aloud he answered, "She told me to tell you that your daughter sends you a good kiss."

"Good-night, neighbor! Sleep well, and pleasant dreams to you! I have mine already made for me by that message from her. May God grant you all your desires! You have come in like a good angel on me to-night, and brought with you the air that my daughter breathes."

"Poor old fellow!" said Eugène as he lay down. "It is enough to melt a heart of stone. His daughter no more thought of him than of the Grand Turk."

Ever after this conference Goriot looked upon his neighbor as a friend, a confidant such as he had never hoped to find; and there was established between the two the only relationship that could attach this old man to another man. The passions never miscalculate. Old Goriot felt that this friendship brought him closer to his daughter Delphine; he thought that he should find a warmer welcome for himself if the Baroness should care for Eugène. Moreover, he had confided one of his troubles to the younger man. Mme. de Nucingen, for whose happiness he prayed a thousand times daily, had never known the joys of love. Eugène was certainly (to make use of his own expression) one of the nicest young men that he had ever seen, and some prophetic instinct seemed to tell him that Eugène was to give her the happiness which had not been hers. These were the beginnings of a friendship that grew up between the old man and his neighbor; but for this friendship the catastrophe of the drama must have remained a mystery.

The affection with which old Goriot regarded Eugène, by whom he seated himself at breakfast, the change in Goriot's face, which, as a rule, looked as expressionless as a plaster cast, and a few words that passed between the two, surprised the other lodgers. Vautrin, who saw Eugène for the first time since their interview, seemed as if he would fain read the student's very soul. During the night Eugène had had some time in which to scan the vast field which lay before him; and now, as he remembered yesterday's proposal, the thought of Mlle. Taillefer's dowry came, of course, to his mind, and he could not help thinking of Victorine as the most exemplary youth may think of an heiress. It chanced that their eyes met. The poor girl did not fail to see that Eugène looked very handsome in his new clothes. So much was said in the glance thus exchanged, that Eugène could not doubt but that he was associated in her mind with the vague hopes that lie dormant in a girl's heart and gather round the first attractive newcomer. "Eight hundred thousand francs!" a voice cried in his ears, but suddenly he took refuge in the memories of yesterday evening, thinking that his extemporized passion for Mme. de Nucingen was a talisman that would preserve him from this temptation.

"They gave Rossini's 'Barber of Seville' at the Italiens yesterday evening," he remarked. "I never heard such delicious music. Good gracious! how lucky people are to have a box at the Italiens!"

Old Goriot drank in every word that Eugène let fall, and watched him as a dog watches his master's slightest movement.

"You men are like fighting-cocks," said Mme. Vauquer; "you do what you like."

"How did you get back?" inquired Vautrin.

"I walked," answered Eugène.

"For my own part," remarked the tempter, "I do not care about doing things by halves. If I want to enjoy myself that way, I should prefer to go in my carriage, sit in my

own box, and do the thing comfortably. Everything or nothing; that is my motto."

"And a good one too," commented Mme. Vauquer.

"Perhaps you will see Mme. de Nucingen to-day," said Eugène, addressing Goriot in an undertone. "She will welcome you with open arms, I am sure; she would want to ask you for all sorts of little details about me. I have found out that she would do anything in the world to be known by my cousin Mme. de Beauséant; don't forget to tell her that I love her too well not to think of trying to arrange this."

Rastignac went at once to the École de droit. He had no mind to stay a moment longer than was necessary in that odious house. He wasted his time that day; he had fallen a victim to that fever of the brain that accompanies the too vivid hopes of youth. Vautrin's arguments had set him meditating on social life, and he was deep in these reflections when he happened on his friend Bianchon in the Jardin du Luxembourg.

"What makes you look so solemn?" said the medical student, putting an arm through Eugène's as they went toward the Palais.

"I am tormented by temptations."

"What kind? There is a cure for temptation."

"What?"

"Yielding to it."

"You laugh, but you don't know what it is all about. Have you read Rousseau?"

"Yes."

"Do you remember that he asks the reader somewhere what he would do if he could make a fortune by killing an old mandarin somewhere in China by mere force of wishing it, and without stirring from Paris?"

"Yes."

"Well, then?"

"Pshaw! I am at my thirty-third mandarin."

"Seriously, though. Look here, suppose you were sure

that you could do it, and had only to give a nod. Would you do it?"

"Is he well stricken in years, this mandarin of yours? Pshaw! after all, young or old, paralytic, or well and sound, my word for it. . . . Well, then. Hang it, no!"

"You are a good fellow, Bianchon. But suppose you loved a woman well enough to lose your soul in hell for her, and that she wanted money, lots of money for dresses and a carriage, and all her whims, in fact?"

"Why, here you are taking away my reason, and want me to reason!"

"Well, then, Bianchon, I am mad; bring me to my senses. I have two sisters as beautiful and innocent as angels, and I want them to be happy. How am I to find two hundred thousand francs apiece for them in the next five years? Now and then in life, you see, you must play for heavy stakes, and it is no use wasting your luck on low play."

"But you are only stating the problem that lies before every one at the outset of his life, and you want to cut the Gordian knot with a sword. If that is the way of it, dear boy, you must be an Alexander, or to the hulks you go. For my own part, I am quite contented with the little lot I mean to make for myself somewhere in the country, when I mean to step into my father's shoes and plod along. A man's affections are just as fully satisfied by the smallest circle as they can be by a vast circumference. Napoleon himself could only dine once, and he could not have more mistresses than a house student at the Capucins. Happiness, old man, depends on what lies between the sole of your foot and the crown of your head; and whether it costs a million or a hundred louis, the actual amount of pleasure that you receive rests entirely with you, and is just exactly the same in any case. I am for letting that Chinaman live."

"Thank you, Bianchon; you have done me good. We will always be friends."

"I say," remarked the medical student, as they came to

the end of a broad walk in the Jardin des Plantes, "I saw the Michonneau and Poiret a few minutes ago on a bench chatting with a gentleman whom I used to see in last year's troubles hanging about the Chamber of Deputies; he seems to me, in fact, to be a detective dressed up like a decent retired tradesman. Let us keep an eye on that couple; I will tell you why some time. Good-by; it is nearly four o'clock, and I must be in to answer to my name."

When Eugène reached the lodging-house, he found old Goriot waiting for him.

"Here!" cried the old man, "here is a letter from her. Pretty handwriting, eh?"

Eugène broke the seal and read:

"SIR—I have heard from my father that you are fond of Italian music. I shall be delighted if you will do me the pleasure of accepting a seat in my box. La Fodor and Pellegriani will sing on Saturday, so I am sure that you will not refuse me. M. de Nucingen and I shall be pleased if you will dine with us; we shall be quite by ourselves. If you will come and be my escort, my husband will be glad to be relieved from his conjugal duties. Do not answer, but simply come.—Yours sincerely,
D. DE N."

"Let me see it," said old Goriot, when Eugène had read the letter. "You are going, aren't you?" he added, when he had smelled the writing-paper. "How nice it smells! Her fingers have touched it, that is certain."

"A woman does not fling herself at a man's head in this way," the student was thinking. "She wants to use me to bring back de Marsay; nothing but pique makes a woman do a thing like this."

"Well," said old Goriot, "what are you thinking about?"

Eugène did not know the fever of vanity that possessed some women in those days; how should he imagine that to open a door in the Faubourg Saint-Germain a banker's wife

would go to almost any length. For the coterie of the Faubourg Saint-Germain was a charmed circle, and the women who moved in it were at that time the queens of society; and among the greatest of these *Dames du Petit-Château*, as they were called, were Mme. de Beauséant and her friends the Duchesse de Langeais and the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse. Rastignac was alone in his ignorance of the frantic efforts made by women who lived in the Chaussée-d'Antin to enter this seventh heaven and shine among the brightest constellations of their sex. But his cautious disposition stood him in good stead, and kept his judgment cool, and the not altogether enviable power of imposing instead of accepting conditions.

"Yes, I am going," he replied.

So it was curiosity that drew him to Mme. de Nucingen; while, if she had treated him disdainfully, passion perhaps might have brought him to her feet. Still he waited almost impatiently for to-morrow, and the hour when he could go to her. There is almost as much charm for a young man in a first flirtation as there is in first love. The certainty of success is a source of happiness to which men do not confess, and all the charm of certain women lies in this. The desire of conquest springs no less from the easiness than from the difficulty of triumph, and every passion is excited or sustained by one or other of these two motives which divide the empire of love. Perhaps this division is one result of the great question of temperaments; which, after all, dominates social life. The melancholic temperament may stand in need of the tonic of coquetry, while those of nervous or sanguine complexion withdraw if they meet with a too stubborn resistance. In other words, the lymphatic temperament is essentially despondent, and the rhapsodic is bilious.

Eugène lingered over his toilet with an enjoyment of all its little details that is grateful to a young man's self-love, though he will not own to it for fear of being laughed at. He thought, as he arranged his hair, that a pretty woman's glances would wander through the dark curls. He indulged

in childish tricks like any young girl dressing for a dance, and gazed complacently at his graceful figure while he smoothed out the creases of his coat.

"There are worse figures, that is certain," he said to himself.

Then he went downstairs, just as the rest of the household were sitting down to dinner, and took with good humor the boisterous applause excited by his elegant appearance. The amazement with which any attention to dress is regarded in a lodging-house is a very characteristic trait. No one can put on a new coat but every one else must say his say about it.

"Clk! clk! clk!" cried Bianchon, making the sound with his tongue against the roof of his mouth, like a driver urging on a horse.

"He holds himself like a duke and a peer of France," said Mme. Vauquer.

"Are you going a-courting?" inquired Mlle. Michonneau.

"Cock-a-doodle-doo!" cried the artist.

"My compliments to my lady your wife," from the employé at the Muséum.

"Your wife; have you a wife?" asked Poiret.

"Yes, in compartments, water-tight and floats, guaranteed fast color, all prices from twenty-five to forty sous, neat check patterns in the latest fashion and best taste, will wash, half-linen, half-cotton, half-wool; a certain cure for toothache and other complaints under the patronage of the Royal College of Physicians! children like it! a remedy for headache, indigestion, and all other diseases affecting the throat, eyes, and ears!" cried Vautrin, with a comical imitation of the volubility of a quack at a fair. "And how much shall we say for this marvel, gentlemen? Twopence? No. Nothing of the sort. All that is left in stock after supplying the Great Mogul. All the crowned heads of Europe, including the Gr-r-r-rand Duke of Baden, have been anxious to get a sight of it. Walk up! walk up! gentlemen! Pay at the desk as you go in! Strike up the music there! Brooom,

la, la, trinn! la, la, boum! boum! Mister Clarinet, there you are out of tune!" he added gruffly; "I will rap your knuckles for you!"

"Goodness! what an amusing man!" said Mme. Vauquer to Mme. Couture; "I should never feel dull with him in the house."

This burlesque of Vautrin's was the signal for an outburst of merriment, and under cover of jokes and laughter Eugène caught a glance from Mlle. Taillefer; she had leaned over to say a few words in Mme. Couture's ear.

"The cab is at the door," announced Sylvie.

"But where is he going to dine?" asked Bianchon.

"With Madame la Baronne de Nucingen."

"M. Goriot's daughter," said the law student.

At this, all eyes turned to the old vermicelli maker; he was gazing at Eugène with something like envy in his eyes.

Rastignac reached the house in the Rue Saint-Lazare, one of those many-windowed houses with a mean-looking portico and slender columns, which are considered the thing in Paris; a typical banker's house, decorated in the most ostentatious fashion; the walls lined with stucco, the landings of marble mosaic. Mme. de Nucingen was sitting in a little drawing-room; the room was painted in the Italian fashion, and decorated like a restaurant. The Baroness seemed depressed. The effort that she made to hide her feelings aroused Eugène's interest; it was plain that she was not playing a part. He had expected a little flutter of excitement at his coming, and he found her dispirited and sad. The disappointment piqued his vanity.

"My claim to your confidence is very small, madame," he said, after rallying her on her abstracted mood; "but if I am in the way, please tell me so frankly; I count on your good faith."

"No, stay with me," she said; "I shall be all alone if you go. Nucingen is dining in town, and I do not want to be alone; I want to be taken out of myself."

"But what is the matter?"

"You are the very last person whom I should tell," she exclaimed.

"Then I am connected in some way with this secret. I wonder what it is."

"Perhaps. Yet, no," she went on; "it is a domestic quarrel, which ought to be buried in the depths of the heart. I am very unhappy; did I not tell you so the day before yesterday? Golden chains are the heaviest of all fetters."

When a woman tells a young man that she is very unhappy, and when the young man is clever, and well dressed, and has fifteen hundred francs lying idle in his pocket, he is sure to think as Eugène said, and he becomes a coxcomb.

"What can you have left to wish for?" he answered. "You are young, beautiful, beloved, and rich."

"Do not let us talk of my affairs," she said, shaking her head mournfully. "We will dine together *tête-à-tête*, and afterward we will go to hear the most exquisite music. Am I to your taste?" she went on, rising and displaying her gown of white cashmere, covered with Persian designs in the most superb taste.

"I wish that you were altogether mine," said Eugène; "you are charming."

"You would have a forlorn piece of property," she said, smiling bitterly. "There is nothing about me that betrays my wretchedness; and yet, in spite of appearances, I am in despair. I cannot sleep; my troubles have broken my night's rest; I shall grow ugly."

"Oh! that is impossible," cried the law student; "but I am curious to know what these troubles can be that a devoted love cannot efface."

"Ah! if I were to tell you about them, you would shun me," she said. "Your love for me as yet is only the conventional gallantry that men use to masquerade in; and, if you really loved me, you would be driven to despair. I must keep silence, you see. Let us talk of something else for pity's sake," she added. "Let me show you my rooms."

"No; let us stay here," answered Eugène; he sat down on the sofa before the fire, and boldly took Mme. de Nucingen's hand in his. She surrendered it to him; he even felt the pressure of her fingers in one of the spasmodic clutches that betray terrible agitation.

"Listen," said Rastignac; "if you are in trouble, you ought to tell me about it. I want to prove to you that I love you for yourself alone. You must speak to me frankly about your troubles, so that I can put an end to them, even if I have to kill half a dozen men; or I shall go, never to return."

"Very well," she cried, putting her hand to her forehead in an agony of despair, "I will put you to the proof, and this very moment. Yes," she said to herself, "I have no other resource left."

She rang the bell.

"Are the horses put in for the master?" she asked of the servant.

"Yes, madame."

"I shall take his carriage myself. He can have mine and my horses. Serve dinner at seven o'clock.

"Now, come with me," she said to Eugène, who thought as he sat in the banker's carriage beside Mme. de Nucingen that he must surely be dreaming.

"To the Palais-Royal," she said to the coachman; "stop near the Théâtre-Français."

She seemed to be too troubled and excited to answer the innumerable questions that Eugène put to her. He was at a loss what to think of her mute resistance, her obstinate silence.

"Another moment and she will escape me," he said to himself.

When the carriage stopped at last, the Baroness gave the law student a glance that silenced his wild words, for he was almost beside himself.

"Is it true that you love me?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered, and in his manner and tone there was no trace of the uneasiness that he felt.

"You will not think ill of me, will you, whatever I may ask of you?"

"No."

"Are you ready to do my bidding?"

"Blindly."

"Have you ever been to a gaming-house?" she asked in a tremulous voice.

"Never."

"Ah! now I can breathe. You will have luck. Here is my purse," she said. "Take it! there are a hundred francs in it, all that such a fortunate woman as I can call her own. Go up into one of the gaming-houses—I do not know where they are, but there are some near the Palais-Royal. Try your luck with the hundred francs at a game they call roulette; lose it all, or bring me back six thousand francs. I will tell you about my troubles when you come back."

"Devil take me, I'm sure, if I have a glimmer of a notion of what I am about, but I will obey you," he added, with inward exultation, as he thought, "She has gone too far to draw back—she can refuse me nothing now!"

Eugène took the dainty little purse, inquired the way of a second-hand clothes-dealer, and hurried to number 9, which happened to be the nearest gaming-house. He mounted the staircase, surrendered his hat, and asked the way to the roulette-table, whither the attendant took him, not a little to the astonishment of the regular comers. All eyes were fixed on Eugène as he asked, without bashfulness, where he was to deposit his stakes.

"If you put a louis on one only of those thirty-six numbers, and it turns up, you will win thirty-six louis," said a respectable-looking, white-haired old man in answer to his inquiry.

Eugène staked the whole of his money on the number 21 (his own age). There was a cry of surprise; before he knew what he had done, he had won.

"Take your money off, sir," said the old gentleman; "you don't often win twice running by that system."

Eugène took the rake that the old man handed to him, and drew in his three thousand six hundred francs, and, still perfectly ignorant of what he was about, staked again on the red. The bystanders watched him enviously as they saw him continue to play. The disk turned, and again he won; the banker threw him three thousand six hundred francs once more.

"You have seven thousand two hundred francs of your own," the old gentleman said in his ear. "Take my advice and go away with your winnings; red has turned up eight times already. If you are charitable, you will show your gratitude for sound counsel by giving a trifle to an old prefect of Napoleon's who is down on his luck."

Rastignac's head was swimming; he saw ten of his louis pass into the white-haired man's possession, and went downstairs with his seven thousand francs; he was still ignorant of the game, and stupefied by his luck.

"So that is over; and now where will you take me?" he asked, as soon as the door was closed, and he showed the seven thousand francs to Mme. de Nucingen.

Delphine flung her arms about him, but there was no passion in that wild embrace.

"You have saved me!" she cried, and tears of joy flowed fast.

"I will tell you everything, my friend. For you will be my friend, will you not? I am rich, you think, very rich; I have everything I want, or I seem as if I had everything. Very well, you must know that M. de Nucingen does not allow me the control of a single penny; he pays all the bills for the house expenses; he pays for my carriages and opera box; he does not give me enough to pay for my dress, and he reduces me to poverty in secret on purpose. I am too proud to beg from him. I should be the vilest of women if I could take his money at the price at which he offers it. Do you ask how I, with seven hundred thousand francs of my own, could let myself be robbed? It is because I was proud, and scorned to speak. We are so young, so artless

when our married life begins! I never could bring myself to ask my husband for money; the words would have made my lips bleed, I did not dare to ask; I spent my savings first, and then the money that my poor father gave me, then I ran into debt. Marriage for me is a hideous farce; I cannot talk about it; let it suffice to say that Nucingen and I have separate rooms, and that I would fling myself out of the window sooner than consent to any other manner of life. I suffered agonies when I had to confess to my girlish extravagance, my debts for jewelry and trifles (for our poor father had never refused us anything, and spoiled us), but at last I found courage to tell him about them. After all, I had a fortune of my own. Nucingen flew into a rage; he said that I should be the ruin of him, and used frightful language! I wished myself a hundred feet down in the earth. He had my dowry, so he paid my debts, but he stipulated at the same time that my expenses in future must not exceed a certain fixed sum, and I gave way for the sake of peace. And then," she went on, "I wanted to gratify the self-love of some one whom you know. He may have deceived me, but I should do him the justice to say that there was nothing petty in his character. But, after all, he threw me over disgracefully. If, at a woman's utmost need, *somebody* heaps gold upon her, he ought never to forsake her; that love should last forever! But you, at one-and-twenty, you, the soul of honor, with the unsullied conscience of youth, will ask me how a woman can bring herself to accept money in such a way? *Mon Dieu!* is it not natural to share everything with the one to whom we owe our happiness? When all has been given, why should we pause and hesitate over a part? Money is as nothing between us until the moment when the sentiment that bound us together ceases to exist. Were we not bound to each other for life? Who that believes in love foresees such an end of love? You swear to love us eternally; how, then, can our interests be separate?

"You do not know how I suffered to-day when Nucingen refused to give me six thousand francs; he spends as much

as that every month on his mistress, an opera dancer! I thought of killing myself. The wildest thoughts came into my head. There have been moments in my life when I have envied my servants, and would have changed places with my maid. It was madness to think of going to our father, Anastasie and I have bled him dry; our poor father would have sold himself if he could have raised six thousand francs that way. I should have driven him frantic to no purpose. You have saved me from shame and death; I was beside myself with anguish. Ah! monsieur, I owed you this explanation after my mad ravings. When you left me just now, as soon as you were out of sight, I longed to escape, to run away . . . where, I did not know. Half the women in Paris lead such lives as mine; they live in apparent luxury, and in their souls are tormented by anxiety. I know of poor creatures even more miserable than I; there are women who are driven to ask their tradespeople to make out false bills, women who rob their husbands. Some men believe that an Indian shawl worth a hundred louis only cost five hundred francs, others that a shawl costing five hundred francs is worth a hundred louis. There are women, too, with narrow incomes, who scrape and save and starve their children to pay for a dress. I am innocent of these base meannesses. But this is the last extremity of my torture. Some women will sell themselves to their husbands, and so obtain their way, but I, at any rate, am free. If I choose, Nucingen would cover me with gold, but I would rather weep on the breast of a man whom I can respect. Ah! to-night M. de Marsay will no longer have a right to think of me as a woman whom he has paid." She tried to conceal her tears from him, hiding her face in her hands; Eugène drew them away and looked at her; she seemed to him sublime at that moment.

"It is hideous, is it not," she cried, "to speak in a breath of money and affection? You cannot love me after this," she added.

The incongruity between the ideas of honor which make

women so great, and the errors in conduct which are forced upon them by the constitution of society, had thrown Eugène's thoughts into confusion; he uttered soothing and consoling words, and wondered at the beautiful woman before him, and at the artless imprudence of her cry of pain.

"You will not remember this against me?" she asked; "promise me that you will not."

"Ah! Madame, I am incapable of doing so," he said. She took his hand and held it to her heart, a movement full of grace that expressed her deep gratitude.

"I am free and happy once more, thanks to you," she said. "Oh! I have felt lately as if I were in the grasp of an iron hand. But after this I mean to live simply and to spend nothing. You will think me just as pretty, will you not, my friend? Keep this," she went on, as she took only six of the banknotes. "In conscience I owe you a thousand crowns, for I really ought to go halves with you."

Eugène's maiden conscience resisted; but when the Baroness said, "I am bound to look on you as an accomplice or as an enemy," he took the money.

"It shall be a last stake in reserve," he said, "in case of misfortune."

"That was what I was dreading to hear," she cried, turning pale. "Oh, if you would that I should be anything to you, swear to me that you will never re-enter a gaming-house. Great heaven! that I should corrupt you! I should die of sorrow!"

They had reached the Rue Saint-Lazare by this time. The contrast between the ostentation of wealth in the house, and the wretched condition of its mistress, dazed the student; and Vautrin's cynical words began to ring in his ears.

"Seat yourself there," said the Baroness, pointing to a low chair beside the fire. "I have a difficult letter to write," she added. "Tell me what to say."

"Say nothing," Eugène answered her. "Put the bills in an envelope, direct it, and send it by your maid."

"Why, you are a love of a man," she said. "Ah! see

what it is to have been well brought up. That is the Beau-séant through and through," she went on, smiling at him.

"She is charming," thought Eugène, more and more in love. He looked round him at the room; there was an ostentatious character about the luxury, a meretricious taste in the splendor.

"Do you like it?" she asked, as she rang for her maid.

"Thérèse, take this to M. de Marsay, and give it into his hands yourself. If he is not at home, bring the letter back to me."

Thérèse went, but not before she had given Eugène a spiteful glance.

Dinner was announced. Rastignac gave his arm to Mme. de Nucingen, she led the way into a pretty dining-room, and again he saw the luxury of the table which he had admired in his cousin's house.

"Come and dine with me on opera evenings, and we will go to the Italiens afterward," she said.

"I should soon grow used to the pleasant life if it could last, but I am a poor student, and I have my way to make."

"Oh! you will succeed," she said, laughing. "You will see. All that you wish will come to pass. I did not expect to be so happy."

It is the wont of women to prove the impossible by the possible, and to annihilate facts by presentiments. When Mme. de Nucingen and Rastignac took their places in her box at the Bouffons, her face wore a look of happiness that made her so lovely that every one indulged in those small slanders against which women are defenceless; for the scandal that is uttered lightly is often seriously believed. Those who know Paris believe nothing that is said, and say nothing of what is done there.

Eugène took the Baroness's hand in his, and by some light pressure of the fingers, or a closer grasp of the hand, they found a language in which to express the sensations which the music gave them. It was an evening of intoxicating delight for both; and when it ended, and they went out

together, Mme. de Nucingen insisted on taking Eugène with her as far as the Pont Neuf, he disputing with her the whole of the way for a single kiss after all those that she had showered upon him so passionately at the Palais-Royal; Eugène reproached her with inconsistency.

"That was gratitude," she said, "for devotion that I did not dare to hope for, but now it would be a promise."

"And will you give me no promise, ingrate?"

He grew vexed. Then, with one of those impatient gestures that fill a lover with ecstasy, she gave him her hand to kiss, and he took it with a discontented air that delighted her.

"I shall see you at the ball on Monday," she said.

As Eugène went home in the moonlight, he fell to serious reflections. He was satisfied, and yet dissatisfied. He was pleased with an adventure which would probably give him his desire, for in the end one of the prettiest and best-dressed women in Paris would be his; but, as a set-off, he saw his hopes of fortune brought to nothing; and as soon as he realized this fact, the vague thoughts of yesterday evening began to take a more decided shape in his mind. A check is sure to reveal to us the strength of our hopes. The more Eugène learned of the pleasures of life in Paris, the more impatient he felt of poverty and obscurity. He crumpled the banknote in his pocket, and found any quantity of plausible excuses for appropriating it.

He reached the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève at last, and from the stair-head he saw a light in Goriot's room; the old man had lighted a candle, and set the door ajar, lest the student should pass him by, and go to his room without "telling him all about his daughter," to use his own expression. Eugène, accordingly, told him everything without reserve.

"Then they think that I am ruined!" cried old Goriot, in an agony of jealousy and desperation. "Why, I have still thirteen hundred livres a year! *Mon Dieu!* Poor little girl! why did she not come to me? I would have sold my *rentes*; she should have had some of the principal, and I would have

bought a life-annuity with the rest. My good neighbor, why did not *you* come to tell me of her difficulty? How had you the heart to go and risk her poor little hundred francs at play? This is heart-breaking work. You see what it is to have sons-in-law. Oh! if I had hold of them, I would wring their necks. *Mon Dieu! crying!* Did you say she was crying?"

"With her head on my waistcoat," said Eugène.

"Oh! give it to me," said old Goriot. "What! my daughter's tears have fallen there—my darling Delphine, who never used to cry when she was a little girl! Oh! I will buy you another; do not wear it again; let me have it. By the terms of her marriage-contract, she ought to have the use of her property. To-morrow morning I will go and see Derville; he is an attorney. I will demand that her money should be invested in her own name. I know the law. I am an old wolf; I will show my teeth."

"Here, father; this is a banknote for a thousand francs that she wanted me to keep out of our winnings. Keep them for her, in the pocket of the waistcoat."

Goriot looked hard at Eugène, reached out and took the law student's hand, and Eugène felt a tear fall on it.

"You will succeed," the old man said. "God is just, you see. I know an honest man when I see him, and I can tell you, there are not many men like you. I am to have another dear child in you, am I? There, go to sleep; you can sleep, you are not yet a father. She was crying! and I have to be told about it!—and I was quietly eating my dinner, like an idiot, all the time—I, who would sell the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to save one tear to either of them."

"An honest man!" said Eugène to himself as he lay down. "Upon my word, I think I will be an honest man all my life; it is so pleasant to obey the voice of conscience." Perhaps none but believers in God do good in secret; and Eugène believed in a God.

The next day Rastignac went at the appointed time to

Mme. de Beauséant, who took him with her to the Duchesse de Carigliano's ball. The Maréchale received Eugène most graciously. Mme. de Nucingen was there. Delphine's dress seemed to suggest that she wished for the admiration of others, so that she might shine the more in Eugène's eyes; she was eagerly expecting a glance from him, hiding, as she thought, this eagerness from all beholders. This moment is full of charm for the one who can guess all that passes in a woman's mind. Who has not refrained from giving his opinion, to prolong her suspense, concealing his pleasure from a desire to tantalize, seeking a confession of love in her uneasiness, enjoying the fears that he can dissipate by a smile? In the course of the evening the law student suddenly comprehended his position; he saw that, as the cousin of Mme. de Beauséant, he was a personage in this world. He was already credited with the conquest of Mme. de Nucingen, and for this reason was a conspicuous figure; he caught the envious glances of other young men, and experienced the earliest pleasures of coxcombry. People wondered at his luck, and scraps of these conversations came to his ears as he went from room to room; all the women prophesied his success; and Delphine, in her dread of losing him, promised that this evening she would not refuse the kiss that all his entreaties could scarcely win yesterday.

Rastignac received several invitations. His cousin presented him to other women who were present; women who could claim to be of the highest fashion; whose houses were looked upon as pleasant; and this was the loftiest and most fashionable society in Paris into which he was launched. So this evening had all the charm of a brilliant *début*; it was an evening that he was to remember even in old age, as a woman looks back on her first ball and the memories of her girlish triumphs.

The next morning, at breakfast, he related the story of his success for the benefit of old Goriot and the lodgers. Vautrin began to smile in a diabolical fashion.

"And do you suppose," cried that cold-blooded logi-

cian, "that a young man of fashion can live here in the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève, in the Maison Vauquer—an exceedingly respectable boarding-house in every way, I grant you, but an establishment that, none the less, falls short of being fashionable? The house is comfortable, it is lordly in its abundance; it is proud to be the temporary abode of a Rastignac; but, after all, it is in the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève, and luxury would be out of place here, where we only aim at the purely *patriarchalorama*. If you mean to cut a figure in Paris, my young friend," Vautrin continued, with half-paternal jocularity, "you must have three horses, a tilbury for the mornings and a closed carriage for the evening; you should spend altogether about nine thousand francs on your stables. You would show yourself unworthy of your destiny if you spent no more than three thousand francs with your tailor, six hundred in perfumery, a hundred crowns to your shoemaker, and a hundred more to your hatter. As for your laundress, there goes another thousand francs; a young man of fashion must of necessity make a great point of his linen; if your linen comes up to the required standard, people often do not look any further. Love and the Church demand a fair altar-cloth. That is fourteen thousand francs. I am saying nothing of losses at play, bets, and presents; it is impossible to allow less than two thousand francs for pocket-money. I have led that sort of life, and I know all about these expenses. Add the cost of necessities next; three hundred louis for provender, a thousand francs for a place to roost in. Well, my boy, for all these little wants of ours we had need to have twenty-five thousand francs every year in our purse, or we shall find ourselves in the kennel, and people laughing at us, and our career is cut short, good-by to success, and good-by to your mistress! I am forgetting your valet and your groom! Is Christophe going to carry your *billets-doux* for you? And do you mean to employ the stationery you use at present? Suicidal policy! Harken to the wisdom of your elders!" he went on, his

bass voice growing louder at each syllable. "Either take up your quarters in a garret, live virtuously, and wed your work, or set about the thing in a different way."

Vautrin winked and leered in the direction of Mlle. Taillefer to enforce his remarks by a look which recalled the late tempting proposals by which he had sought to corrupt the student's mind.

Several days went by, and Rastignac lived in a whirl of gayety. He dined almost every day with Mme. de Nucingen, and went wherever she went, only returning to the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève in the small hours. He rose at midday, and dressed to go into the Bois with Delphine if the day was fine, squandering in this way time that was worth far more than he knew. He turned as eagerly to learn the lessons of luxury, and was as quick to feel its fascination, as the flowers of the date palm to receive the fertilizing pollen. He played high, lost and won large sums of money, and at last became accustomed to the extravagant life that young men lead in Paris. He sent fifteen hundred francs out of his first winnings to his mother and sisters, sending handsome presents as well as the money. He had given out that he meant to leave the Maison Vauquer; but January came and went, and he was still there, still unprepared to go.

One rule holds good of most young men—whether rich or poor. They never have money for the necessities of life, but they have always money to spare for their caprices—an anomaly which finds its explanation in their youth and in the almost frantic eagerness with which youth grasps at pleasure. They are reckless with anything obtained on credit, while everything for which they must pay in ready money is made to last as long as possible; if they cannot have all that they want, they make up for it, it would seem, by squandering what they have. To state the matter simply—a student is far more careful of his hat than of his coat, because, the latter being a comparatively costly article of dress, it is in the nature of things that a tailor should be

a creditor; but it is otherwise with the latter; the sums of money spent with him are so modest that he is the most independent and unmanageable of his tribe, and it is almost impossible to bring him to terms. The young man in the balcony of a theatre who displays a gorgeous waistcoat for the benefit of the fair owners of opera glasses has very probably no socks in his wardrobe, for the hosier is another of the genus of weevils that nibble at the purse. This was Rastignac's condition. His purse was always empty for Mme. Vauquer, always full at the demand of vanity; there was a periodical ebb and flow in his fortunes, which was seldom favorable to the payment of just debts. If he was to leave that unsavory and mean abode, where from time to time his pretensions met with humiliation, the first step was to pay his hostess for a month's board and lodging, and the second to purchase furniture worthy of the new lodgings he must take in his quality of dandy, a course that remained impossible. Rastignac, out of his winnings at cards, would pay his jeweller exorbitant prices for gold watches and chains, and then, to meet the exigencies of play, would carry them to the pawnbroker, that discreet and forbidding-looking friend of youth; but when it was a question of paying for board or lodging, or for the necessary implements for the cultivation of his Elysian fields, his imagination and pluck alike deserted him. There was no inspiration to be found in vulgar necessity, in debts contracted for past requirements. Like most of those who trust to their luck, he put off till the last moment the payment of debts that among the bourgeoisie are regarded as sacred engagements, acting on the plan of Mirabeau, who never settled his baker's bill until it underwent a formidable transformation into a bill of exchange.

It was about this time, when Rastignac was down on his luck and fell into debt, that it became clear to the law student's mind that he must have some more certain source of income if he meant to live as he had been doing. But while he groaned over the thorny problems of his precarious situa-

tion, he felt that he could not bring himself to renounce the pleasures of this extravagant life, and decided that he must continue it at all costs. His dreams of obtaining a fortune appeared more and more chimerical, and the real obstacles grew more formidable. His initiation into the secrets of the Nucingen household had revealed to him that if he were to attempt to use this love affair as a means of mending his fortunes he must swallow down all sense of decency, and renounce all the generous ideas which redeem the sins of youth. He had chosen this life of apparent splendor, but secretly gnawed by the canker worm of remorse, a life of fleeting pleasure dearly paid for by persistent pain; like *Le Distrait* of La Bruyère, he had descended so far as to make his bed in a ditch; but (also like *Le Distrait*) he himself was uncontaminated as yet by the mire that stained his garments.

"So we have killed our mandarin, have we?" said Bianchon one day as they left the dinner-table.

"Not yet," he answered, "but he is at the last gasp."

The medical student took this for a joke, but it was not a jest. Eugène had dined in the house that night for the first time for a long while, and had looked thoughtful during the meal. He had taken his place beside Mlle. Taillefer, and stayed through the dessert, giving his neighbor an expressive glance from time to time. A few of the boarders discussed the walnuts at the table, and others walked about the room, still taking part in a conversation which had begun among them. People usually went when they chose; the amount of time that they lingered being determined by the amount of interest that the conversation possessed for them, or by the difficulty of the process of digestion. In winter-time the room was seldom empty before eight o'clock, when the four women had it all to themselves, and made up for the silence previously imposed upon them by the preponderating masculine element. This evening Vautrin had noticed Eugène's abstractedness, and stayed in the room, though he had seemed to be in a hurry to finish

his dinner and go. All through the talk afterward he had kept out of sight of the law student, who quite believed that Vautrin had left the room. He now took up his position cunningly in the sitting-room instead of going when the last boarders went. He had fathomed the young man's thoughts and felt that a crisis was at hand. Rastignac was, in fact, in a dilemma, which many another young man must have known.

Mme. de Nucingen might love him, or might merely be playing with him, but in either case Rastignac had been made to experience all the alternations of hope and despair, of genuine passion, and all the diplomatic arts of a Parisienne had been employed on him. After compromising herself by continually appearing in public with Mme. de Beauséaut's cousin she still hesitated, and would not give him the lover's privileges which he appeared to enjoy. For a whole month she had so wrought on his senses that at last she had made an impression on his heart. If in the earliest days the student had fancied himself to be the master, Mme. de Nucingen had since become the stronger of the two, for she had skilfully roused and played upon every instinct, good or bad, in the two or three men comprised in a young student in Paris. This was not the result of deep design on her part, nor was she playing a part, for women are in a manner true to themselves even through their grossest deceit, because their actions are prompted by a natural impulse. It may have been that Delphine, who had allowed this young man to gain such an ascendancy over her, conscious that she had been too demonstrative, was obeying a sentiment of dignity, and either repented of her concessions, or it pleased her to suspend them. It is so natural to a Parisienne, even when passion has almost mastered her, to hesitate and pause before taking the plunge; to probe the heart of him to whom she intrusts her future. And once already Mme. de Nucingen's hopes had been betrayed, and her loyalty to a selfish young lover had been despised. She had good reason to be suspicious. Or it

may have been that something in Eugène's manner (for his rapid success was making a coxcomb of him) had warned her that the grotesque nature of their position had lowered her somewhat in his eyes. She doubtless wished to assert her dignity; he was young, and she would be great in his eyes; for the lover who had forsaken her had held her so cheap that she was determined that Eugène should not think her an easy conquest, and for this very reason—he knew that de Marsay had been his predecessor. Finally, after the degradation of submission to the pleasure of a heartless young rake, it was so sweet to her to wander in the flower-strewn realms of love that it was not wonderful that she should wish to dwell a while on the prospect, to tremble with the vibrations of love, to feel the freshness of the breath of its dawn. The true lover was suffering for the sins of the false. This inconsistency is unfortunately only to be expected so long as men do not know how many flowers are mown down in a young woman's soul by the first stroke of treachery.

Whatever her reasons may have been, Delphine was playing with Rastignac, and took pleasure in playing with him, doubtless because she felt sure of his love, and confident that she could put an end to the torture as soon as it was her royal pleasure to do so. Eugène's self-love was engaged; he could not suffer his first passage of love to end in a defeat, and persisted in his suit, like a sportsman determined to bring down at least one partridge to celebrate his first Feast of Saint Hubert. The pressure of anxiety, his wounded self-love, his despair, real or feigned, drew him nearer and nearer to this woman. All Paris credited him with this conquest, and yet he was conscious that he had made no progress since the day when he saw Mme. de Nucingen for the first time. He did not know as yet that a woman's coquetry is sometimes more delightful than the pleasure of secure possession of her love, and was possessed with helpless rage. If, at this time, while she denied herself to love, Eugène gathered the springtide spoils of his life, the

fruit, somewhat sharp and green, and dearly bought, was no less delicious to the taste. There were moments when he had not a *sou* in his pockets, and at such times he thought in spite of his conscience of Vautrin's offer and the possibility of fortune by a marriage with Mlle. Taillefer. Poverty would clamor so loudly that more than once he was on the point of yielding to the cunning temptations of the terrible sphinx, whose glance had so often exerted a strange spell over him.

Poiret and Mlle. Michonneau went up to their rooms; and Rastignac, thinking that he was alone with the women in the dining-room, sat between Mme. Vauquer and Mme. Couture, who was nodding over the woollen cuffs that she was knitting by the stove, and looked at Mlle. Taillefer so tenderly that she lowered her eyes.

"Can you be in trouble, M. Eugène?" Victorine said after a pause.

"Who has not his troubles?" answered Rastignac. "If we men were sure of being loved, sure of a devotion which would be our reward for the sacrifices which we are always ready to make, then perhaps we should have no troubles."

For answer Mlle. Taillefer only gave him a glance, but it was impossible to mistake its meaning.

"You, for instance, mademoiselle; you feel sure of your heart to-day, but are you sure that it will never change?"

A smile flitted over the poor girl's lips; it seemed as if a ray of light from her soul had lighted up her face. Eugène was dismayed at the sudden explosion of feeling caused by his words.

"Ah! but suppose," he said, "that you should be rich and happy to-morrow, suppose that a vast fortune dropped down from the clouds for you, would you still love the man whom you loved in your days of poverty?"

A charming movement of the head was her only answer.

"Even if he were very poor?"

Again the same mute answer.

"What nonsense are you talking, you two?" exclaimed Mme. Vauquer.

"Never mind," answered Eugène; "we understand each other."

"So there is to be an engagement of marriage between M. le Chevalier Eugène de Rastignac and Mlle. Victorine Taillefer, is there?" The words were uttered in Vautrin's deep voice, and Vautrin appeared at the door as he spoke.

"Oh! how you startled me!" Mme. Couture and Mme. Vauquer exclaimed together.

"I might make a worse choice," said Rastignac, laughing. Vautrin's voice had thrown him into the most painful agitation that he had yet known.

"No bad jokes, gentlemen!" said Mme. Couture. "My dear, let us go upstairs."

Mme. Vauquer followed the two ladies, meaning to pass the evening in their room, an arrangement that economized fire and candlelight. Eugène and Vautrin were left alone.

"I felt sure you would come round to it," said the elder man with the coolness that nothing seemed to shake. "But stay a moment! I have as much delicacy as anybody else. Don't make up your mind on the spur of the moment; you are a little thrown off your balance just now. You are in debt, and I want you to come over to my way of thinking after sober reflection, and not in a fit of passion or desperation. Perhaps you want a thousand crowns. There, you can have them if you like."

The tempter took out a pocket-book, and drew thence three banknotes, which he fluttered before the student's eyes. Eugène was in a most painful dilemma. He had debts, debts of honor. He owed a hundred louis to the Marquis d'Ajuda and to the Comte de Trailles; he had not the money, and for this reason had not dared to go to Mme. de Restaud's house, where he was expected that evening. It was one of those informal gatherings where tea and little cakes are handed round, but where it is possible to lose six thousand francs at whist in the course of a night.

"You must see," said Eugène, struggling to hide a convulsive tremor, "that, after what has passed between us, I cannot possibly lay myself under any obligation to you."

"Quite right; I should be sorry to hear you speak otherwise," answered the tempter. "You are a fine young fellow, honorable, brave as a lion, and as gentle as a young girl. You would be a fine haul for the devil! I like youngsters of your sort. Get rid of one or two more prejudices, and you will see the world as it is. Make a little scene now and then, and act a virtuous part in it, and a man with a head on his shoulders can do exactly as he likes amid deafening applause from the fools in the gallery. Ah! a few days yet, and you will be with us; and if you would only be tutored by me, I would put you in the way of achieving all your ambitions. You should no sooner form a wish than it should be realized to the full; you should have all your desires—honors, wealth, or women. Civilization should flow with milk and honey for you. You should be our pet and favorite, our Benjamin. We would all work ourselves to death for you with pleasure; every obstacle should be removed from your path. You have a few prejudices left; so you think that I am a scoundrel, do you? Well, M. de Turenne, quite as honorable a man as you take yourself to be, had some little private transactions with bandits, and did not feel that his honor was tarnished. You would rather not lie under any obligation to me, eh? You need not draw back on that account," Vautrin went on, and a smile stole over his lips. "Take those bits of paper and write across this," he added, producing a piece of stamped paper, "*Accepted the sum of three thousand five hundred francs due this day twelvemonth*, and fill in the date. The rate of interest is stiff enough to silence any scruples on your part; it gives you the right to call me a Jew. You can call quits with me on the score of gratitude. I am quite willing that you should despise me to-day, because I am sure that you will have a kindlier feeling toward me later on. You will find out fathomless depths

in my nature, enormous and concentrated forces that weaklings call vices, but you will never find me base or ungrateful. In short, I am neither a pawn nor a bishop, but a castle, a tower of strength, my boy."

"What manner of man are you?" cried Eugène. "Were you created to torment me?"

"Why, no; I am a good-natured fellow, who is willing to do a dirty piece of work to put you high and dry above the mire for the rest of your days. Do you ask the reason of this devotion? All right; I will tell you that some of these days. A word or two in your ear will explain it. I have begun by shocking you, by showing you the way to ring the changes, and giving you a sight of the mechanism of the social machine; but your first fright will go off like a conscript's terror on the battlefield. You will grow used to regarding men as common soldiers who have made up their minds to lose their lives for some self-constituted king. Times have altered strangely. Once you could say to a bravo, 'Here are a hundred crowns; go and kill Monsieur So-and-so for me,' and you could sup quietly after turning some one off into the dark for the least thing in the world. But nowadays I propose to put you in the way of a handsome fortune; you have only to nod your head, it won't compromise you in any way, and you hesitate. 'Tis an effeminate age."

Eugène accepted the draft, and received the banknotes in exchange for it.

"Well, well. Come, now, let us talk rationally," Vautrin continued. "I mean to leave this country in a few months' time for America, and set about planting tobacco. I will send you the cigars of friendship. If I make money at it, I will help you in your career. If I have no children—which will probably be the case, for I have no anxiety to raise slips of myself here—you shall inherit my fortune. That is what you may call standing by a man; but I myself have a liking for you. I have a mania, too, for devoting myself to some one else. I have done it before. You see,

my boy, I live in a loftier sphere than other men do; I look on all actions as means to an end, and the end is all that I look at. What is a man's life to me? Not *that*," he said, and he snapped his thumb-nail against his teeth. "A man, in short, is everything to me, or just nothing at all. Less than nothing if his name happens to be Poirot: you can crush him like a bug, he is flat and he is offensive. But a man is a god when he is like you; he is not a machine covered with a skin, but a theatre in which the greatest sentiments are displayed—great thoughts and feelings—and for these, and these only, I live. A sentiment—what is that but the whole world in a thought? Look at old Goriot. For him, his two girls are the whole universe; they are the clew by which he finds his way through creation. Well, for my own part, and I have fathomed the depths of life, there is only one real sentiment—comradeship between man and man. Pierre and Jaffier, that is my passion. I know 'Venice Preserved' by heart. Have you met many men plucky enough when a comrade says, 'Let us bury a dead body!' to go and do it without a word or plaguing him by taking a high moral tone? I have done it myself. I should not talk like this to just everybody, but you are not like an ordinary man; one can talk to you, you can understand things. You will not dabble about much longer among the tadpoles in these swamps. Well, then, it is all settled. You will marry. Both of us carry our point. Mine is made of iron, and will never soften, he! he!"

Vautrin went out. He would not wait to hear the student's repudiation, he wished to put Eugène at his ease. He seemed to understand the secret springs of the faint resistance still made by the younger man; the struggles in which men seek to preserve their self-respect by justifying their blameworthy actions to themselves.

"He may do as he likes; I shall not marry Mlle. Taillefer, that is certain," said Eugène to himself.

He regarded this man with abhorrence, and yet the very cynicism of Vautrin's ideas, and the audacious way in which

he used other men for his own ends, raised him in the student's eyes; but the thought of a compact threw Eugène into a fever of apprehension, and not until he had recovered somewhat did he dress, call for a cab, and go to Mme. de Restaud's.

For some days the Countess had paid more and more attention to a young man whose every step seemed a triumphal progress in the great world; it seemed to her that he might be a formidable power before long. He paid Messieurs de Trailles and d'Ajuda, played at whist for part of the evening, and made good his losses. Most men who have their way to make are more or less of fatalists, and Eugène was superstitious; he chose to consider that his luck was heaven's reward for his perseverance in the right way. As soon as possible on the following morning he asked Vautrin whether the bill that he had given was still in the other's possession; and on receiving a reply in the affirmative, he repaid the three thousand francs with a not unnatural relief.

"Everything is going on well," said Vautrin.

"But I am not your accomplice," said Eugène.

"I know, I know," Vautrin broke in. "You are still acting like a child. You are making mountains out of mole hills at the outset."

Two days later, Poirot and Mlle. Michonneau were sitting together on a bench in the sun. They had chosen a little-frequented alley in the Jardin des Plantes, and a gentleman was chatting with them, the same person, as a matter of fact, about whom the medical student had, not without good reason, his own suspicions.

"Mademoiselle," this M. Gondureau was saying, "I do not see any cause for your scruples. His Excellency Monseigneur the Minister of Police—"

"Ah!" echoed Poirot, "His Excellency Monseigneur the Minister of Police!"

"Yes, his Excellency is taking a personal interest in the matter," said Gondureau.

Who would think it probable that Poirot, a retired clerk,

doubtless possessed of some notions of civic virtue, though there might be nothing else in his head—who would think it likely that such a man would continue to lend an ear to this supposed independent gentleman of the Rue de Buffon, when the latter dropped the mask of a decent citizen by that word “police,” and gave a glimpse of the features of a detective from the Rue de Jérusalem? And yet nothing was more natural. Perhaps the following remarks from the hitherto unpublished records made by certain observers will throw a light on the particular species to which Poiret belonged in the great family of fools. There is a race of quill-drivers, confined in the columns of the budget between the first degree of latitude (a kind of administrative Greenland where the salaries begin at twelve hundred francs) to the third degree, a more temperate zone, where incomes grow from three to six thousand francs, a climate where the *bonus* flourishes like a half-hardy annual in spite of some difficulties of culture. A characteristic trait that best reveals the feeble narrow-mindedness of these inhabitants of petty officialdom is a kind of involuntary, mechanical, and instinctive reverence for the Grand Lama of every Ministry, known to the rank and file only by his signature (an illegible scrawl) and by his title—“His Excellency Monseigneur le Ministre,” five words which produce as much effect as the *il Bondo Cani* of the *Calife de Bagdad*, five words which in the eyes of this low order of intelligence represent a sacred power from which there is no appeal. The Minister is administratively infallible for the clerks in the employ of the Government, as the Pope is infallible for good Catholics. Something of his peculiar radiance invests everything he does or says, or that is said or done in his name; the robe of office covers everything and legalizes everything done by his orders; does not his very title—His Excellency—vouch for the purity of his intentions and the righteousness of his will, and serve as a sort of passport and introduction to ideas that otherwise would not be entertained for a moment? Pronounce the words “His Excellency,” and these poor folk

will forthwith proceed to do what they would not do for their own interests. Passive obedience is as well known in a Government department as in the army itself; and the administrative system silences consciences, annihilates the individual, and ends (give it time enough) by fashioning a man into a vise or a thumbscrew, and he becomes part of the machinery of Government. Wherefore, M. Gondureau, who seemed to know something of human nature, recognized Poiret at once as one of these dupes of officialdom, and brought out for his benefit, at the proper moment, the *deus ex machinâ*, the magical words "His Excellency," so as to dazzle Poiret just as he himself unmasked his batteries, for he took Poiret and the Michonneau for the male and female of the same species.

"If his Excellency himself, his Excellency the Minister . . . Ah! that is quite another thing," said Poiret.

"You seem to be guided by this gentleman's opinion, and you hear what he says," said the man of independent means, addressing Mlle. Michonneau. "Very well, his Excellency is at this moment absolutely certain that the so-called Vautrin, who lodges at the Maison Vauquer, is a convict who escaped from penal servitude at Toulon, where he is known by the nickname Trompe-la-Mort."

"Trompe-la-Mort?" said Poiret. "Dear me, he is very lucky if he deserves that nickname."

"Well, yes," said the detective. "They call him so because he has been so lucky as not to lose his life in the very risky businesses that he has carried through. He is a dangerous man, you see! He has qualities that are out of the common; the thing he is wanted for, in fact, was a matter which gained him no end of credit with his own set—"

"Then is he a man of honor?" asked Poiret.

"Yes, according to his notions. He agreed to take another man's crime upon himself—a forgery committed by a very handsome young fellow that he had taken a great fancy to, a young Italian, a bit of a gambler, who has since gone into the army, where his conduct has been unexceptionable."

"But if his Excellency the Minister of Police is certain that M. Vautrin is this Trompe-la-Mort, why should he want me?" asked Mlle. Michonneau.

"Oh, yes," said Poirot, "if the Minister, as you have been so obliging as to tell us, really knows for a certainty—"

"Certainty is not the word; he only suspects. You will soon understand how things are. Jacques Collin, nicknamed Trompe-la-Mort, is in the confidence of every convict in the three prisons; he is their man of business and their banker. He makes a very good thing out of managing their affairs, which want a *man of mark* to see about them."

"Ha! ha! do you see the pun, mademoiselle?" asked Poirot. "This gentleman calls him a *man of mark* because he is a *marked man*—branded, you know."

"This so-called Vautrin," said the detective, "receives the money belonging to my lords the convicts, invests it for them, and holds it at the disposal of those who escape, or hands it over to their families if they leave a will, or to their mistresses when they draw upon him for their benefit."

"Their mistresses! You mean their wives," remarked Poirot.

"No, sir. A convict's wife is usually an illegitimate connection. We call them concubines."

"Then they all live in a state of concubinage?"

"Naturally."

"Why, these are abominations that his Excellency ought not to allow. Since you have the honor of seeing his Excellency, you, who seem to have philanthropic ideas, ought really to enlighten him as to their immoral conduct—they are setting a shocking example to the rest of society."

"But the Government does not hold them up as models of all the virtues, my dear sir."

"Of course not, sir; but still—"

"Just let the gentleman say what he has to say, dearie," said Mlle. Michonneau.

"You see how it is, mademoiselle," Gondureau continued. "The Government may have the strongest reasons for getting

this illicit hoard into its hands; it mounts up to something considerable, by all that we can make out. Trompe-la-Mort not only holds very large sums for his friends the convicts, but he has other amounts which are paid over to him by the Society of the Ten Thousand—”

“Ten Thousand Thieves!” cried Poirot in alarm.

“No. The Society of the Ten Thousand is not an association of petty offenders, but of people who set about their work on a large scale—they won’t touch a matter unless there are ten thousand francs in it. It is composed of the most distinguished of the men who are sent straight to the Assize Courts when they come up for trial. They know the Code too well to risk their necks when they are nabbed. Collin is their confidential agent and legal adviser. By means of the large sums of money at his disposal he has established a sort of detective system of his own; it is widespread, and mysterious in its workings. We have had spies all about him for a twelvemonth, and yet we could not manage to fathom his games. His capital and his cleverness are at the service of vice and crime; this money furnishes the necessary funds for a regular army of blackguards in his pay who wage incessant war against society. If we can catch Trompe-la-Mort, and take possession of his funds, we should strike at the root of this evil. So this job is a kind of Government affair—a State secret—and likely to redound to the honor of those who bring the thing to a successful conclusion. You, sir, for instance, might very well be taken into a Government department again; they might make you secretary to a Commissary of Police; you could accept that post without prejudice to your retiring pension.”

Mlle. Michonneau interposed at this point with, “What is there to hinder Trompe-la-Mort from making off with the money?”

“Oh!” said the detective, “a man is told off to follow him everywhere he goes, with orders to kill him if he were to rob the convicts. Then it is not quite as easy to make off with a lot of money as it is to run away with a young

lady of family. Besides, Collin is not the sort of fellow to play such a trick; he would be disgraced, according to his notions."

"You are quite right, sir," said Poiret, "utterly disgraced he would be."

"But none of all this explains why you do not come and take him without more ado," remarked Mlle. Michonneau.

"Very well, mademoiselle, I will explain—but," he added in her ear, "keep your companion quiet, or I shall never have done. The old boy ought to pay people handsomely for listening to him.—*Trompe-la-Mort*, when he came back here," he went on aloud, "slipped into the skin of an honest man; he turned up disguised as a decent Parisian citizen, and took up his quarters in an unpretending lodging-house. He is cunning, that he is! You won't catch him napping. Then M. Vautrin is a man of consequence, who transacts a good deal of business."

"Naturally," said Poiret to himself.

"And suppose that the Minister were to make a mistake and get hold of the real Vautrin, he would put every one's back up among the business men in Paris, and public opinion would be against him. M. le Préfet de Police is on slippery ground; he has enemies. They would take advantage of any mistake. There would be a fine outcry and fuss made by the Opposition, and he would be sent packing. We must set about this just as we did about the Cogniard affair, the sham Comte de Sainte-Hélène; if he had been the real Comte de Sainte-Hélène, we should have been in the wrong box. We want to be quite sure what we are about."

"Yes, but what you want is a pretty woman," said Mlle. Michonneau briskly.

"*Trompe-la-Mort* would not let a woman come near him," said the detective. "I will tell you a secret—he does not like them."

"Still, I do not see what I can do, supposing that I did agree to identify him for two thousand francs."

"Nothing simpler," said the stranger. "I will send you

a little bottle containing a dose that will send a rush of blood to the head; it will do him no harm whatever, but he will fall down as if he were in a fit. The drug can be put into wine or coffee; either will do equally well. You carry your man to bed at once, and undress him to see that he is not dying. As soon as you are alone, you give him a slap on the shoulder, and, *presto!* the letters will appear."

"Why, that is just nothing at all," said Poiret.

"Well, do you agree?" said Gondureau, addressing the old maid.

"But, my dear sir, suppose there are no letters at all," said Mlle. Michonneau; "am I to have the two thousand francs all the same?"

"No."

"What will you give me, then?"

"Five hundred francs."

"It is such a thing to do for so little! It lies on your conscience just the same, and I must quiet my conscience, sir."

"I assure you," said Poiret, "that Mademoiselle has a great deal of conscience, and not only so, she is a very amiable person, and very intelligent."

"Well, now," Mlle. Michonneau went on, "make it three thousand francs if he is Trompe-la-Mort, and nothing at all if he is an ordinary man."

"Done!" said Gondureau, "but on condition that the thing is settled to-morrow."

"Not quite so soon, my dear sir; I must consult my confessor first."

"You are a sly one," said the detective as he rose to his feet. "Good-by till to-morrow, then. And if you should want to see me in a hurry, go to the Petite Rue Sainte-Anne at the bottom of the Cour de la Sainte Chapelle. There is only one door under the archway. Ask there for M. Gondureau."

Bianchon, on his way back from Cuvier's lecture, overheard the sufficiently striking nickname of Trompe-la-Mort, and caught the celebrated chief detective's "*Done!*"

"Why didn't you close with him? It would be three hundred francs a year," said Poiret to Mlle. Michonneau.

"Why didn't I?" she asked. "Why, it wants thinking over. Suppose that M. Vautrin is this Trompe-la-Mort, perhaps we might do better for ourselves with him. Still, on the other hand, if you ask him for money, it would put him on his guard, and he is just the man to clear out without paying, and that would be an abominable sell."

"And suppose you did warn him," Poiret went on, "didn't that gentleman say that he was closely watched? You would spoil everything."

"Anyhow," thought Mlle. Michonneau, "I can't abide him. He says nothing but disagreeable things to me."

"But you can do better than that," Poiret resumed. "As that gentleman said (and he seemed to me to be a very good sort of man, besides being very well got up), it is an act of obedience to the laws to rid society of a criminal, however virtuous he may be. Once a thief, always a thief. Suppose he were to take it into his head to murder us all? The deuce! We should be guilty of manslaughter, and be the first to fall victims into the bargain!"

Mlle. Michonneau's musings did not permit her to listen very closely to the remarks that fell one by one from Poiret's lips like water dripping from a leaky tap. When once this elderly babbler began to talk, he would go on like clock-work unless Mlle. Michonneau stopped him. He started on some subject or other, and wandered on through parenthesis after parenthesis till he came to regions as remote as possible from his premises without coming to any conclusions by the way.

By the time they reached the Maison Vauquer he had tacked together a whole string of examples and quotations more or less irrelevant to the subject in hand, which led him to give a full account of his own deposition in the case of the *Sieur Ragoulleau versus Dame Morin*, when he had been summoned as a witness for the defence.

As they entered the dining-room, Eugène de Rastignac

was talking apart with Mlle. Taillefer; the conversation appeared to be of such thrilling interest that the pair never noticed the two older lodgers as they passed through the room. None of this was thrown away on Mlle. Michonneau.

"I knew how it would end," remarked that lady, addressing Poiret. "They have been making eyes at each other in a heartrending way for a week past."

"Yes," he answered. "So she was found guilty."

"Who?"

"Mme. Morin."

"I am talking about Mlle. Victorine," said Mlle. Michonneau, as she entered Poiret's room with an absent air, "and you answer, 'Mme. Morin.' Who may Mme. Morin be?"

"What can Mlle. Victorine be guilty of?" demanded Poiret.

"Guilty of falling in love with M. Eugène de Rastignac, and going further and further without knowing exactly where she is going, poor innocent!"

That morning Mme. de Nucingen had driven Eugène to despair. In his own mind he had completely surrendered himself to Vautrin, and deliberately shut his eyes to the motive for the friendship which that extraordinary man professed for him, nor would he look to the consequences of such an alliance. Nothing short of a miracle could extricate him now out of the gulf into which he had walked an hour ago, when he exchanged vows in the softest whispers with Mlle. Taillefer. To Victorine it seemed as if she heard an angel's voice, that heaven was opening above her; the Maison Vauquer took strange and wonderful hues, like a stage fairy-palace. She loved and she was beloved; at any rate, she believed that she was loved; and what woman would not likewise have believed after seeing Rastignac's face and listening to the tones of his voice during that hour snatched under the Argus eyes of the Maison Vauquer? He had trampled on his conscience; he knew that he was doing wrong, and did it deliberately;

he had said to himself that a woman's happiness should atone for this venial sin. The energy of desperation had lent new beauty to his face; the lurid fire that burned in his heart shone from his eyes. Luckily for him, the miracle took place. Vautrin came in in high spirits, and at once read the hearts of these two young creatures whom he had brought together by the combinations of his infernal genius, but his deep voice broke in upon their bliss.

A charming girl is my Fanchette
In her simplicity,"

he sang mockingly.

Victorine fled. Her heart was more full than it had ever been, but it was full of joy, and not of sorrow. Poor child! A pressure of the hand, the light touch of Rastignac's hair against her cheek, a word whispered in her ear so closely that she felt the student's warm breath on her, the pressure of a trembling arm about her waist, a kiss upon her throat—such had been her betrothal. The near neighborhood of the stout Sylvie, who might invade that glorified room at any moment, only made these first tokens of love more ardent, more eloquent, more entrancing than the noblest deeds done for love's sake in the most famous romances. This *plain-song* of love, to use the pretty expression of our forefathers, seemed almost criminal to the devout young girl who went to confession every fortnight. In that one hour she had poured out more of the treasures of her soul than she could give in later days of wealth and happiness, when her whole self followed the gift.

"The thing is arranged," Vautrin said to Eugène, who remained. "Our two dandies have fallen out. Everything was done in proper form. It is a matter of opinion. Our pigeon has insulted my hawk. They will meet to-morrow in the redoubt at Clignancourt. By half-past eight in the morning Mlle. Taillefer, calmly dipping her bread and butter in her coffee cup, will be sole heiress of her father's fortune and affections. A funny way of putting it, isn't it? Taillefer's youngster is an expert swordsman, and

quite cocksure about it, but he will be bled; I have just invented a thrust for his benefit, a way of raising your sword point and driving it at the forehead. I must show you that thrust; it is an uncommonly handy thing to know."

Rastignac heard him in dazed bewilderment; he could not find a word in reply. Just then Goriot came in, and Bianchon and a few of the boarders likewise appeared.

"That is just as I intended," Vautrin said. "You know quite well what you are about. Good, my little eaglet! You are born to command, you are strong, you stand firm on your feet, you are game! I respect you."

He made as though he would take Eugène's hand, but Rastignac hastily withdrew it, sank into a chair, and turned ghastly pale; it seemed to him that there was a sea of blood before his eyes.

"Oh! so we have still a few dubious tatters of the swaddling clothes of virtue about us!" murmured Vautrin. "But Papa Doliban has three millions; I know the amount of his fortune. Once have her dowry in your hands, and your character will be as white as the bride's white dress, even in your own eyes."

Rastignac hesitated no longer. He made up his mind that he would go that evening to warn the Taillefers, father and son. But just as Vautrin left him, old Goriot came up and said in his ear, "You look melancholy, my boy; I will cheer you up. Come with me."

The old vermicelli dealer lighted his dip at one of the lamps as he spoke. Eugène went with him, his curiosity had been aroused.

"Let us go up to your room," the worthy soul remarked, when he had asked Sylvie for the law student's key. "This morning," he resumed, "you thought that *she* did not care about you, did you not? Eh? She would have nothing to say to you, and you went away out of humor and out of heart. Stuff and rubbish! She wanted you to go because she was expecting *me*! Now do you understand? We

were to complete the arrangements for taking some chambers for you, a jewel of a place, you are to move into it in three days' time. Don't split upon me. She wants it to be a surprise; but I couldn't bear to keep the secret from you. You will be in the Rue d'Artois, only a step or two from the Rue Saint-Lazare, and you are to be housed like a prince! Any one might have thought we were furnishing the house for a bride. Oh! we have done a lot of things in the last month, and you knew nothing about it. My attorney has appeared on the scene, and my daughter is to have thirty-six thousand francs a year, the interest on her money, and I shall insist on having her eight hundred thousand francs invested in sound securities, landed property that won't run away."

Eugène was dumb. He folded his arms and paced up and down his cheerless, untidy room. Old Goriot waited till the student's back was turned, and seized the opportunity to go to the chimney-piece and set upon it a little red morocco case with Rastignac's arms stamped in gold on the leather.

"My dear boy," said the kind soul, "I have been up to the eyes in this business. You see, there was plenty of selfishness on my part; I have an interested motive in helping you to change lodgings. You will not refuse me if I ask you something; will you, eh?"

"What is it?"

"There is a room on the fifth floor, up above your rooms, that is to let along with them; that is where I am going to live, isn't that so? I am getting old; I am too far from my girls. I shall not be in the way, but I shall be there, that is all. You will come and talk to me about her every evening. It will not put you about, will it? I shall have gone to bed before you come in, but I shall hear you come up, and I shall say to myself, 'He has just seen my little Delphine. He has been to a dance with her, and she is happy, thanks to him.' If I were ill, it would do my heart good to hear you moving about below, to know when

you leave the house and when you come in. It is only a step to the Champs-Élysées, where they go every day, so I shall be sure of seeing them, whereas now I am sometimes too late. And then—perhaps she may come to see you! I shall hear her, I shall see her in her soft quilted pelisse tripping about as daintily as a kitten. In this one month she has become my little girl again, so light-hearted and gay. Her soul is recovering, and her happiness is owing to you! Oh! I would do impossibilities for you. Only just now she said to me, 'I am very happy, papa!' When they say 'father' stiffly, it sends a chill through me; but when they call me 'papa,' it is as if they were little girls again, and it brings all the old memories back. I feel most their father then; I even believe that they belong to me, and to no one else."

The good man wiped his eyes, he was crying.

"It is a long while since I have heard them talk like that, a long, long time since she took my arm as she did to-day. Yes, indeed, it must be quite ten years since I walked side by side with one of my girls. How pleasant it was to keep step with her, to feel the touch of her gown, the warmth of her arm! Well, I took Delphine everywhere this morning; I went shopping with her, and I brought her home again. Oh! you must let me live near you. You may want some one to do you a service some of these days, and I shall be on the spot to do it. Oh! if only that great dolt of an Alsatian would die, if his gout would have the sense to attack his stomach, how happy my poor child would be! You would be my son-in-law; you would be her husband in the eyes of the world. Bah! she has known no happiness, that excuses everything. Our Father in heaven is surely on the side of fathers on earth who love their children. How fond of you she is!" he said, raising his head after a pause. "All the time we were going about together she chatted away about you. 'He is nice-looking, papa; isn't he? He is kind-hearted! Does he talk to you about me?' Pshaw! she said enough about you to fill whole volumes;

between the Rue d'Artois and the Passage des Panoramas she poured her heart out into mine. I did not feel old once during that delightful morning; I felt as light as a feather. I told her how you had given that banknote to me; it moved my darling to tears. But what can this be on your chimney-piece?" said old Goriot at last.

Rastignac had showed no sign, and he was dying of impatience.

Eugène stared at his neighbor in dumb and dazed bewilderment. He thought of Vautrin, of that duel to be fought to-morrow morning, and of this realization of his dearest hopes, and the violent contrast between the two sets of ideas gave him all the sensations of nightmare. He went to the chimney-piece, saw the little square case, opened it, and found a watch of Bréguet's make wrapped in paper, on which these words were written:

"I want you to think of me every hour, *because . . .*
"DELPHINE."

That last word doubtless contained an allusion to some scene that had taken place between them. Eugène felt touched. Inside the gold watch-case his arms had been wrought in enamel. The chain, the key, the workmanship, and design of the trinket were all such as he had imagined, for he had long coveted such a possession. Old Goriot was radiant. Of course he had promised to tell his daughter every little detail of the scene and of the effect produced upon Eugène by her present; he shared in the pleasure and excitement of the young people, and seemed to be not the least happy of the three. He loved Rastignac already for his own as well as for his daughter's sake.

"You must go and see her; she is expecting you *this* evening. That great lout of an Alsatian is going to have supper with his opera-dancer. Aha! he looked very foolish when my attorney let him know where he was. He

says he idolizes my daughter, does he? He had better let her alone, or I will kill him. To think that my Delphine is his"—he heaved a sigh—"it is enough to make me murder him, but it would not be manslaughter to kill that animal; he is a pig with a calf's brains.—You will take me with you, will you not?"

"Yes, dear Father Goriot; you know very well how fond I am of you—"

"Yes, I do know very well. You are not ashamed of me, are you? Not you! Let me embrace you," and he flung his arms round the student's neck.

"You will make her very happy; promise me that you will! You will go to her this evening, will you not?"

"Oh! yes. I must go out; I have some urgent business on hand."

"Can I be of any use?"

"My word, yes! Will you go to old Taillefer's while I go to Mme. de Nucingen. Ask him to make an appointment with me some time this evening; it is a matter of life and death."

"Really, young man!" cried old Goriot, with a change of countenance; "are you really paying court to his daughter, as those simpletons were saying down below? . . . *Tonnerre de Dieu!* you have no notion what a tap *à la Goriot* is like, and if you are playing a double game, I shall put a stop to it by one blow of the fist. . . . Oh! the thing is impossible!"

"I swear to you that I love but one woman in the world," said the student. "I only knew it a moment ago."

"Oh! what happiness!" cried Goriot.

"But young Taillefer has been called out; the duel comes off to-morrow morning, and I have heard it said that he may lose his life in it."

"But what business is it of yours?" said Goriot.

"Why, I ought to tell him so, that he may prevent his son from putting in an appearance—"

Just at that moment Vautrin's voice broke in upon them; he was standing at the threshold of his door and singing:

"Oh! Richard, oh my king!
All the world abandons thee!
Broum! broum! broum! broum! broum!

"The same old story everywhere.
A roving heart and a . . . tra la la."

"Gentlemen!" shouted Christophe, "the soup is ready, and every one is waiting for you."

"Here," Vautrin called down to him, "come and take a bottle of my Bordeaux."

"Do you think your watch is pretty?" asked Goriot. "She has good taste, hasn't she? Eh?"

Vautrin, old Goriot, and Rastignac came downstairs in company, and, all three of them being late, were obliged to sit together.

Eugène was as distant as possible in his manner to Vautrin during dinner; but the other, so charming in Mme. Vauquer's opinion, had never been so witty. His lively sallies and sparkling talk put the whole table in good humor. His assurance and coolness filled Eugène with consternation.

"Why, what has come to you to-day?" inquired Mme. Vauquer. "You are as merry as a skylark."

"I am always in spirits after I have made a good bargain."

"Bargain?" said Eugène.

"Well, yes, bargain. I have just delivered a lot of goods, and I shall be paid a handsome commission on them.—Mlle. Michonneau," he went on, seeing that the elderly spinster was scrutinizing him intently, "have you any objection to some feature in my face, that you are making those lynx eyes at me? Just let me know, and I will have it changed to oblige you. . . . We shall not fall out about it, Poiret, I daresay?" he added, winking at the superannuated clerk.

"Bless my soul, you ought to stand as model for a burlesque Hercules," said the young painter.

"I will, upon my word! if Mlle. Michonneau will consent to sit as the Venus of Père-Lachaise," replied Vautrin.

"There's Poiret," suggested Bianchon.

"Oh! Poiret shall pose as Poiret. He can be a garden god!" cried Vautrin; "his name means a pear—"

"A sleepy pear!" Bianchon put in. "You will come in between the pear and the cheese."

"What stuff you are all talking!" said Mme. Vauquer; "you would do better to treat us to your Bordeaux; I see a glimpse of a bottle there. It would keep us all in a good humor, and it is good for the stomach besides."

"Gentlemen," said Vautrin, "the Lady President calls us to order. Mme. Couture and Mlle. Victorine will take your jokes in good part, but respect the innocence of the aged Goriot. I propose a glass or two of Bordeauxrama, rendered twice illustrious by the name of Laffitte, no political allusions intended.—Come, you Turk!" he added, looking at Christophe, who did not offer to stir. "Christophe! Here! What, you don't answer to your own name? Bring us some liquor, Turk!"

"Here it is, sir," said Christophe, holding out the bottle.

Vautrin filled Eugène's glass and Goriot's likewise, then he deliberately poured out a few drops into his own glass, and sipped it while his two neighbors drank their wine. All at once he made a grimace.

"Corked!" he cried. "The devil! You can drink the rest of this, Christophe, and go and find another bottle; take from the right-hand side, you know. There are sixteen of us; take down eight bottles."

"If you are going to stand treat," said the painter, "I will pay for a hundred chestnuts."

"Oh! oh!"

"Booououh!"

"Prrrr!"

These exclamations came from all parts of the table like squibs from a set firework.

"Come, now, Mamma Vauquer, a couple of bottles of champagne," called Vautrin.

"*Quien!* just like you! Why not ask for the whole house

at once? A couple of bottles of champagne; that means twelve francs! I shall never see the money back again, I know! But if M. Eugène has a mind to pay for it, I have some currant cordial."

"That currant cordial of hers is as bad as a black draught," muttered the medical student.

"Shut up, Bianchon," exclaimed Rastignac; "the very mention of black draught makes me feel— Yes, champagne, by all means; I will pay for it," he added.

"Sylvie," called Mme. Vauquer, "bring in some biscuits and the little cakes."

"Those little cakes are mouldy graybeards," said Vautrin. "But trot out the biscuits."

The Bordeaux wine circulated; the dinner table became a livelier scene than ever, and the fun grew fast and furious. Imitations of the cries of various animals mingled with the loud laughter; the Museum official having taken it into his head to mimic a cat-call rather like the caterwauling of the animal in question, eight voices simultaneously struck up with the following variations:

"Scissors to grind!"

"Chick-weed for singing birds!"

"Brandy-snaps, ladies!"

"China to mend!"

"Boat ahoy!"

"Sticks to beat your wives or your clothes!"

"Old clo'!"

"Cherries all ripe!"

But the palm was awarded to Bianchon for the nasal accent with which he rendered the cry of "Umbrellas to me-end!"

A few seconds later, and there was a head-splitting racket in the room, a storm of tomfoolery, a sort of cats' concert, with Vautrin as conductor of the orchestra, the latter keeping an eye the while on Eugène and old Goriot. The wine seemed to have gone to their heads already. They leaned back in their chairs, looking at the general confusion with

an air of gravity, and drank but little; both of them were absorbed in the thought of what lay before them to do that evening, and yet neither of them felt able to rise and go. Vautrin gave a side glance at them from time to time, and watched the change that came over their faces, choosing the moment when their eyes drooped and seemed about to close, to bend over Rastignac and to say in his ear:

"My little lad, you are not quite shrewd enough to outwit Papa Vautrin yet, and he is too fond of you to let you make a mess of your affairs. When I have made up my mind to do a thing, no one short of Providence can put me off. Aha! we were for going round to warn old Taillefer, telling tales out of school! The oven is hot, the dough is kneaded, the bread is ready for the oven; to-morrow we will eat it up and whisk away the crumbs; and we are not going to spoil the baking? . . . No, no, it is all as good as done! We may suffer from a few conscientious scruples, but they will be digested along with the bread. While we are having our forty winks, Colonel Count Franchessini will clear the way to Michel Taillefer's inheritance with the point of his sword. Victorine will come in for her brother's money, a snug fifteen thousand francs a year. I have made inquiries already, and I know that her late mother's property amounts to more than three hundred thousand—"

Eugène heard all this, and could not answer a word; his tongue seemed to be glued to the roof of his mouth, an irresistible drowsiness was creeping over him. He still saw the table and the faces round it, but it was through a bright mist. Soon the noise began to subside, one by one the boarders went. At last, when their numbers had so dwindled that the party consisted of Mme. Vauquer, Mme. Couture, Mlle. Victorine, Vautrin, and old Goriot, Rastignac watched as though in a dream how Mme. Vauquer busied herself by collecting the bottles, and drained the remainder of the wine out of each to fill others.

"Oh! how uproarious they are! what a thing it is to be young!" said the widow.

These were the last words that Eugène heard and understood.

"There is no one like M. Vautrin for a bit of fun like this," said Sylvie. "There, just hark at Christophe, he is snoring like a top."

"Good-by, mamma," said Vautrin; "I am going to a theatre on the boulevard to see M. Marty in 'Le Mont Sauvage,' a fine play taken from 'Le Solitaire.' . . . If you like, I will take you and these two ladies —"

"Thank you; I must decline," said Mme. Couture.

"What! my good lady!" cried Mme. Vauquer, "decline to see a play founded on the 'Le Solitaire,' a work by Atala de Chateaubriand. We were so fond of that book that we cried over it like Magdalens under the *line-trees* last summer, and then it is an improving work that might edify your young lady."

"We are forbidden to go to the play," answered Victorine.

"Just look, those two yonder have dropped off where they sit," said Vautrin, shaking the heads of the two sleepers in a comical way.

He altered the sleeping student's position, settled his head more comfortably on the back of his chair, kissed him warmly on the forehead, and began to sing:

"Sleep, little darlings;
I watch while you slumber."

"I am afraid he may be ill," said Victorine.

"Then stop and take care of him," returned Vautrin. "'Tis your duty as a meek and obedient wife," he whispered in her ear. "The young fellow worships you, and you will be his little wife—there's your fortune for you. In short," he added aloud, "'they lived happily ever afterward, were much looked up to in all the countryside, and had a numerous family.' That is how all the romances end.—Now, mamma," he went on, as he turned to Mme. Vauquer and put his arm round her waist, "put on your bonnet, your best

flowered silk, and the countess's scarf, while I go out to call a cab—all my own self."

And he started out, singing as he went:

"Oh! sun! divine sun!
Ripening the pumpkins every one."

"My goodness! Well, I'm sure! Mme. Couture, I could live happily in a garret with a man like that.—There, now!" she added, looking round for the old vermicelli maker, "there is that old Goriot half seas over. *He* never thought of taking me anywhere, the old skinflint. But he will measure his length somewhere. My word! it is disgraceful to lose his senses like that, at his age! You will be telling me that he couldn't lose what he hadn't got—Sylvie! just take him up to his room!"

Sylvie took him by the arm, supported him upstairs, and flung him just as he was, like a package, across the bed.

"Poor young fellow!" said Mme. Couture, putting back Eugène's hair that had fallen over his eyes; "he is like a young girl, he does not know what dissipation is."

"Well, I can tell you this, I know," said Mme. Vauquer, "I have taken lodgers these thirty years, and a good many have passed through my hands, as the saying is, but I have never seen a nicer nor a more aristocratic-looking young man than M. Eugène. How handsome he looks sleeping! Just let his head rest on your shoulder, Mme. Couture. Pshaw! he falls over toward Mlle. Victorine. There's a special providence for young things. A little more, and he would have broken his head against the knob of the chair. They'd make a pretty pair, those two would!"

"Hush, my good neighbor," cried Mme. Couture, "you are saying such things—"

"Pooh!" put in Mme. Vauquer, "he does not hear.—Here, Sylvie! come and help me to dress. I shall put on my best stays."

"What! your best stays just after dinner, madame?" said Sylvie. "No, you can get some one else to lace you. I am

not going to be your murderer. It's a rash thing to do, and might cost you your life."

"I don't care, I must do honor to M. Vautrin."

"Are you so fond of your heirs as all that?"

"Come, Sylvie, don't argue," said the widow, as she left the room.

"At her age, too!" said the cook to Victorine, pointing to her mistress as she spoke.

Mme. Couture and her ward were left in the dining-room, and Eugène slept on on Victorine's shoulder. The sound of Christophe's snoring echoed through the silent house; Eugène's quiet breathing seemed all the quieter by force of contrast, he was sleeping as peacefully as a child. Victorine was very happy; she was free to perform one of those acts of charity which form an innocent outlet for all the overflowing sentiments of a woman's nature; he was so close to her that she could feel the throbbing of his heart; there was a look of almost maternal protection and a conscious pride in Victorine's face. Among the countless thoughts that crowded up in her young innocent heart, there was a wild flutter of joy at this close contact.

"Poor, dear child!" said Mme. Couture, squeezing her hand.

The old lady looked at the girl. Victorine's innocent, pathetic face, so radiant with the new happiness that had befallen her, called to mind some naive work of medieval art, when the painter neglected the accessories, reserving all the magic of his brush for the quiet, austere outlines and ivory tints of the face, which seems to have caught something of the golden glory of heaven.

"After all, he only took two glasses, mamma," said Victorine, passing her fingers through Eugène's hair.

"Indeed, if he had been a dissipated young man, child, he would have carried his wine like the rest of them. His drowsiness does him credit."

There was a sound of wheels outside in the street.

"There is M. Vautrin, mamma," said the girl. "Just take

M. Eugène. I would rather not have that man see me like this; there are some ways of looking at you that seem to sully your soul and make you feel as though you had nothing on."

"Oh, no, you are wrong!" said Mme. Couture. "M. Vautrin is a worthy man; he reminds me a little of my late husband, poor dear M. Couture, rough but kind-hearted; his bark is worse than his bite."

Vautrin came in while she was speaking; he did not make a sound, but looked for a while at the picture of the two young faces—the lamplight falling full upon them seemed to caress them.

"Well," he remarked, folding his arms, "here is a picture! It would have suggested some pleasing pages to Bernardin de Saint-Pierre (good soul), who wrote 'Paul et Virginie.' Youth is very charming, Mme. Couture!—Sleep on, poor boy," he added, looking at Eugène, "luck sometimes comes while we are sleeping.—There is something touching and attractive to me about this young man, madame," he continued; "I know that his nature is in harmony with his face. Just look, the head of a cherub on an angel's shoulder! He deserves to be loved. If I were a woman, I would die (no—not such a fool), I would live for him." He bent lower and spoke in the widow's ear. "When I see those two together, madame, I cannot help thinking that Providence meant them for each other; He works by secret ways, and tries the reins and the heart," he said in a loud voice. "And when I see you, my children, thus united by a like purity and by all human affections, I say to myself that it is quite impossible that the future should separate you. God is just."—He turned to Victorine. "It seems to me," he said, "that I have seen the line of success in your hand. Let me look at it, Mlle. Victorine; I am well up in palmistry, and I have told fortunes many a time. Come, now, don't be frightened. Ah! what do I see? Upon my word, you will be one of the richest heiresses in Paris before very long. You will heap riches on the man who loves you.

Your father will want you to go and live with him. You will marry a young and handsome man with a title, and he will idolize you."

The heavy footsteps of the coquettish widow, who was coming down the stairs, interrupted Vautrin's fortune-telling. "Here is Mamma Vauquerre, fair as a starr-r-r, dressed within an inch of her life.—Aren't we a trifle pinched for room?" he inquired, with his arm round the lady; "we are screwed up very tightly about the bust, mamma! If we are much agitated, there may be an explosion; but I will pick up the fragments with all the care of an antiquary."

"There is a man who can talk the language of French gallantry!" said the widow, bending to speak in Mme. Couture's ear.

"Good-by, little ones!" said Vautrin, turning to Eugène and Victorine. "Bless you both!" and he laid a hand on either head. "Take my word for it, young lady, an honest man's prayers are worth something; they should bring you happiness, for God hears them."

"Good-by, dear," said Madame Vauquer to her lodger. "Do you think that M. Vautrin means to run away with me?" she added, lowering her voice.

"Lack-a-day!" said the widow.

"Oh! mamma dear, suppose it should really happen as that kind M. Vautrin said!" said Victorine with a sigh, as she looked at her hands. The two women were alone together.

"Why, it wouldn't take much to bring it to pass," said the elder lady; "just a fall from his horse, and your monster of a brother—"

"Oh! mamma."

"Good Lord! Well, perhaps it is a sin to wish bad luck to an enemy," the widow remarked. "I will do penance for it. Still, I would strew flowers on his grave with the greatest pleasure, and that is the truth. Black-hearted, that he is! The coward couldn't speak up for his own mother, and cheats you out of your share by deceit and trickery."

My cousin had a pretty fortune of her own, but, unluckily for you, nothing was said in the marriage contract about anything that she might come in for."

"It would be very hard if my good fortune is to cost some one else his life," said Victorine. "If I cannot be happy unless my brother is to be taken out of the world, I would rather stay here all my life."

"Mon Dieu! it is just as that good M. Vautrin says, and he is full of piety, you see," Mme. Couture remarked. "I am very glad to find that he is not an unbeliever like the rest of them that talk of the Almighty with less respect than they do of the Devil. Well, as he was saying, who can know the ways by which it may please Providence to lead us?"

With Sylvie's help the two women at last succeeded in getting Eugène up to his room; they laid him on the bed, and the cook unfastened his clothes to make him more comfortable. Before they left the room, Victorine snatched an opportunity when her guardian's back was turned, and pressed a kiss on Eugène's forehead, feeling all the joy that this stolen pleasure could give her. Then she looked round the room, and gathering up, as it were, into one single thought all the untold bliss of that day, she made a picture of her memories, and dwelt upon it until she slept, the happiest creature in Paris.

That evening's merrymaking, in the course of which Vautrin had given the drugged wine to Eugène and old Goriot, was his own ruin. Bianchon, flustered with wine, forgot to open the subject of *Trompe-la-Mort* with Mlle. Michonneau. The mere mention of the name would have set Vautrin on his guard; for Vautrin, or, to give him his real name, Jacques Collin, was in fact the notorious escaped convict.

But it was the joke about the Venus of *Père-Lachaise* that finally decided his fate. Mlle. Michonneau had very nearly made up her mind to warn the convict and to throw herself on his generosity, with the idea of making a better bargain for herself by helping him to escape that night; but

as it was, she went out escorted by Poiret in search of the famous chief of detectives in the Petite Rue Saint-Anne, still thinking that it was the district superintendent—one Gondureau—with whom she had to do. The head of the department received his visitors courteously. There was a little talk, and the details were definitely arranged. Mlle. Michonneau asked for the draught that she was to administer in order to set about her investigation. But the great man's evident satisfaction set Mlle. Michonneau thinking; and she began to see that this business involved something more than the mere capture of a runaway convict. She racked her brains while he looked in a drawer in his desk for the little phial, and it dawned upon her that in consequence of treacherous revelations made by the prisoners the police were hoping to lay their hands on a considerable sum of money. But on hinting her suspicions to the old fox of the Petite Rue Saint-Anne, that officer began to smile, and tried to put her off the scent.

"A delusion," he said. "Collin's *sorbonne* is the most dangerous that has yet been found among the dangerous classes. That is all, and the rascals are quite aware of it. They rally round him; he is the backbone of the federation, its Bonaparte, in short; he is very popular with them all. The rogue will never leave his *chump* in the Place de Grève."

As Mlle. Michonneau seemed mystified, Gondureau explained the two slang words for her benefit. *Sorbonne* and *chump* are two forcible expressions borrowed from thieves' Latin, thieves, of all people, being compelled to consider the human head in its two aspects. A *sorbonne* is the head of a living man, his faculty of thinking—his council; a *chump* is a contemptuous epithet that implies how little a human head is worth after the axe has done its work.

"Collin is playing us off," he continued. "When we come across a man like a bar of steel tempered in the English fashion, there is always one resource left—we can kill him if he takes it into his head to make the least resistance. We are reckoning on several methods of killing Collin to-

morrow morning. It saves a trial, and society is rid of him without all the expense of guarding and feeding him. What with getting up the case, summoning witnesses, paying their expenses, and carrying out the sentence, it costs a lot to go through all the proper formalities before you can get quit of one of these good-for-nothings, over and above the three thousand francs that you are going to have. There is a saving in time as well. One good thrust of the bayonet into *Trompe-la-Mort*'s paunch will prevent scores of crimes, and save fifty scoundrels from following his example; they will be very careful to keep themselves out of the police courts. That is doing the work of the police thoroughly, and true philanthropists will tell you that it is better to prevent crime than to punish it."

"And you do a service to our country," said Poiret.

"Really, you are talking in a very sensible manner to-night, that you are," said the head of the department. "Yes, of course, we are serving our country, and we are very hardly used too. We do society very great services that are not recognized. In fact, a superior man must rise above vulgar prejudices, and a Christian must resign himself to the mishaps that doing right entails, when right is done in an out-of-the-way style. Paris is Paris, you see! That is the explanation of my life.—I have the honor to wish you a good-evening, mademoiselle. I shall bring my men to the *Jardin du Roi* in the morning. Send Christophe to the *Rue du Buffon*, tell him to ask for M. Gondureau in the house where you saw me before.—Your servant, sir. If you should ever have anything stolen from you, come to me, and I will do my best to get it back for you."

"Well, now," Poiret remarked to Mlle. Michonneau, "there are idiots who are scared out of their wits by the word police. That was a very pleasant-spoken gentleman, and what he wants you to do is as easy as saying 'Good-day.'"

The next day was destined to be one of the most extraordinary in the annals of the *Maison Vauquer*. Hitherto the

most startling occurrence in its tranquil existence had been the portentous, meteor-like apparition of the sham Comtesse de l'Ambermesnil. But the catastrophes of this great day were to cast all previous events into the shade, and supply an inexhaustible topic of conversation for Mme. Vauquer and her boarders so long as she lived.

In the first place, Goriot and Eugène de Rastignac both slept till close upon eleven o'clock. Mme. Vauquer, who came home about midnight from the Gaîté, lay abed till half-past ten. Christophe, after a prolonged slumber (he had finished Vautrin's first bottle of wine), was behind-hand with his work, but Poiret and Mlle. Michonneau uttered no complaint, though breakfast was delayed. As for Victorine and Mme. Couture, they also lay late. Vautrin went out before eight o'clock, and only came back just as breakfast was ready. Nobody protested, therefore, when Sylvie and Christophe went up at a quarter-past eleven, knocked at all the doors, and announced that breakfast was waiting. While Sylvie and the man were upstairs, Mlle. Michonneau, who came down first, poured the contents of the phial into the silver cup belonging to Vautrin—it was standing with the others in the bain-marie that kept the cream hot for the morning coffee. The spinster had reckoned on this custom of the house to do her stroke of business. The seven lodgers were at last collected together, not without some difficulty. Just as Eugène came downstairs, stretching himself and yawning, a commissionaire handed him a letter from Mme. de Nucingen. It ran thus:

"I feel neither false vanity nor anger where you are concerned, my friend. Till two o'clock this morning I waited for you. Oh, that waiting for one whom you love! No one that had passed through that torture could inflict it on another. I know now that you have never loved before. What can have happened? Anxiety has taken hold of me. I would have come myself to find out what had happened, if I had not feared to betray the secrets of my heart. How

can I walk out or drive out at this time of day? Would it not be ruin? I have felt to the full how wretched it is to be a woman. Send a word to reassure me, and explain how it is that you have not come after what my father told you. I shall be angry, but I will forgive you. One word, for pity's sake. You will come to me very soon, will you not? If you are busy, a word will be enough. Say, 'I will hasten to you,' or else, 'I am ill.' But if you were ill my father would have come to tell me so. What can have happened? . . ."

"Yes, indeed, what has happened?" exclaimed Eugène, and, hurrying down to the dining-room, he crumpled up the letter without reading any more. "What time is it?"

"Half-past eleven," said Vautrin, dropping a lump of sugar into his coffee.

The escaped convict cast a glance at Eugène, a cold and fascinating glance; men gifted with this magnetic power can quell furious lunatics in a madhouse by such a glance, it is said. Eugène shook in every limb. There was the sound of wheels in the street, and in another moment a man with a scared face rushed into the room. It was one of M. Taillefer's servants; Mme. Couture recognized the livery at once.

"Mademoiselle," he cried, "your father is asking for you—something terrible has happened! M. Frédéric has had a sword thrust in the forehead in a duel, and the doctors have given him up. You will scarcely be in time to say good-by to him! he is unconscious."

"Poor young fellow!" exclaimed Vautrin. "How can people brawl when they have a certain income of thirty thousand livres? Young people have bad manners, and that is a fact."

"Sir!" cried Eugène.

"Well, what then, you big baby!" said Vautrin, swallowing down his coffee imperturbably, an operation which Mlle. Michonneau watched with such close attention that she had no emotion to spare for the amazing news that had

struck the others dumb with amazement. "Are there not duels every morning in Paris?" added Vautrin.

"I will go with you, Victorine," said Mme. Couture, and the two women hurried away at once without either hats or shawls. But before she went, Victorine, with her eyes full of tears, gave Eugène a glance that said—"How little I thought that our happiness should cost me tears!"

"Dear me, you are a prophet, M. Vautrin," said Mme. Vauquer.

"I am all sorts of things," said Vautrin.

"Queer, isn't it?" said Mme. Vauquer, stringing together a succession of commonplaces suited to the occasion. "Death takes us off without asking us about it. The young often go before the old. It is a lucky thing for us women that we are not liable to fight duels, but we have other complaints that men don't suffer from. We bear children, and it takes a long time to get over it. What a windfall for Victorine! Her father will have to acknowledge her now!"

"There!" said Vautrin, looking at Eugène, "yesterday she had not a penny; this morning she has several millions to her fortune."

"I say, M. Eugène!" cried Mme. Vauquer, "you have landed on your feet!"

At this exclamation, old Goriot looked at the student, and saw the crumpled letter still in his hand.

"You have not read it through! What does this mean? Are you going to be like the rest of them?" he asked.

"Madame, I shall never marry Mlle. Victorine," said Eugène, turning to Mme. Vauquer with an expression of terror and loathing that surprised the onlookers at this scene.

Old Goriot caught the student's hand and grasped it warmly. He could have kissed it.

"Oh, ho!" said Vautrin, "the Italians have a good proverb—*Col tempo*."

"Is there any answer?" said Mme. de Nucingen's messenger, addressing Eugène.

"Say that I will come directly."

The man went. Eugène was in a state of such violent excitement that he could not be prudent.

"What is to be done?" he exclaimed aloud. "There are no proofs!"

Vautrin began to smile. Though the drug he had taken was doing its work, the convict was so vigorous that he rose to his feet, gave Rastignac a look, and said in hollow tones, "Luck comes to us while we sleep, young man," and fell stiff and stark, as if he were struck dead.

"So there is a Divine Justice!" said Eugène.

"Well, if ever! What has come to that poor dear M. Vautrin?"

"A stroke!" cried Mlle. Michonneau.

"Here, Sylvia! girl, run for the doctor," called the widow. "Oh, M. Rastignac, just go for M. Bianchon, and be as quick as you can; Sylvie might not be in time to catch our doctor, M. Grimpel."

Rastignac was glad of an excuse to leave that den of horrors, his hurry for the doctor was nothing but a flight.

"Here, Christophe, go round to the chemist's and ask for something that's good for the apoplexy."

Christophe likewise went.

"Father Goriot, just help us to get him upstairs."

Vautrin was taken up among them, carried carefully up the narrow staircase, and laid upon his bed.

"I can do no good here, so I shall go to see my daughter," said M. Goriot.

"Selfish old thing!" cried Mme. Vauquer. "Yes, go; I wish you may die like a dog."

"Just go and see if you can find some ether," said Mlle. Michonneau to Mme. Vauquer; the former, with some help from Poiret, had unfastened the sick man's clothes.

Mme. Vauquer went down to her room, and left Mlle. Michonneau mistress of the situation.

"Now! just pull down his shirt and turn him over, quick! You might be of some use in sparing my mod-

esty," she said to Poiret, "instead of standing there like a stock."

Vautrin was turned over; Mlle. Michonneau gave his shoulder a sharp slap, and the two portentous letters appeared, white against the red.

"There, you have earned your three thousand francs very easily," exclaimed Poiret, supporting Vautrin while Mlle. Michonneau slipped on the shirt again.—"Ouf! how heavy he is," he added, as he laid the convict down.

"Hush! Suppose there is a strong-box here!" said the old maid briskly; her glances seemed to pierce the walls, she scrutinized every article of the furniture with greedy eyes. "Could we find some excuse for opening that desk?"

"It mightn't be quite right," responded Poiret to this.

"Where is the harm? It is money stolen from all sorts of people, so it doesn't belong to any one now. But we haven't time, there is the Vauquer."

"Here is the ether," said that lady. "I must say that this is an eventful day. Lord! that man can't have had a stroke; he is as white as curds."

"White as curds?" echoed Poiret.

"And his pulse is steady," said the widow, laying her hand on his breast.

"Steady?" said the astonished Poiret.

"He is all right."

"Do you think so?" asked Poiret.

"Lord! Yes, he looks as if he were sleeping. Sylvie has gone for a doctor. I say, Mlle. Michonneau, he is sniffing the ether. Pooh! it is only a spasm. His pulse is good. He is as strong as a Turk. Just look, mademoiselle, what a fur tippet he has on his chest; that is the sort of man to live till he is a hundred. His wig holds on tightly, however. Dear me! it is glued on, and his own hair is red; that is why he wears a wig. They always say that red-haired people are either the worst or the best. Is he one of the good ones, I wonder?"

"Good to hang," said Poiret.

"Round a pretty woman's neck, you mean," said Mlle. Michonneau, hastily. "Just go away, M. Poiret. It is a woman's duty to nurse you men when you are ill. Besides, for all the good you are doing, you may as well take yourself off," she added. "Mme. Vauquer and I will take great care of dear M. Vautrin."

Poiret went out on tiptoe without a murmur, like a dog kicked out of the room by his master.

Rastignac had gone out for the sake of physical exertion; he wanted to breathe the air, he felt stifled. Yesterday evening he had meant to prevent the murder arranged for half-past eight that morning. What had happened? What ought he to do now? He trembled to think that he himself might be implicated. Vautrin's coolness still further dismayed him.

"Yet, how if Vautrin should die without saying a word?" Rastignac asked himself.

He hurried along the alleys of the Luxembourg Gardens as if the hounds of justice were after him, and he already heard the baying of the pack.

"Well," shouted Bianchon, "have you seen the 'Pilote'?"

The "Pilote" was a Radical sheet, edited by M. Tissot. It came out several hours later than the morning papers, and was meant for the benefit of country subscribers; for it brought the morning's news into provincial districts twenty-four hours sooner than the ordinary local journals.

"There is a wonderful history in it," said the house student of the Hôpital Cochin. "Young Taillefer called out Count Franchessini, of the Old Guard, and the Count put a couple of inches of steel into his forehead. And here is little Victorine one of the richest heiresses in Paris! If we had known that, eh? What a game of chance death is! They said Victorine was sweet on you; was there any truth in it?"

"Shut up, Bianchon; I shall never marry her. I am in love with a charming woman, and she is in love with me, so—"

"You said that as if you were screwing yourself up to be faithful to her. I should like to see the woman worth the sacrifice of Master Taillefer's money!"

"Are all the devils of hell at my heels?" cried Rastignac.

"What is the matter with you? Are you mad? Give us your hand," said Bianchon, "and let me feel your pulse. You are feverish."

"Just go to Mother Vauquer's," said Rastignac; "that scoundrel Vautrin has dropped down like one dead."

"Aha!" said Bianchon, leaving Rastignac to his reflections, "you confirm my suspicions, and now I mean to make sure for myself."

The law student's long walk was a memorable one for him. He made in some sort a survey of his conscience. After a close scrutiny, after hesitation and self-examination, his honor at any rate came out scathless from this sharp and terrible ordeal, like a bar of iron tested in the English fashion. He remembered old Goriot's confidences of the evening before; he recollected the rooms taken for him in the Rue d'Artois, so that he might be near Delphine; and then he thought of his letter, and read it again and kissed it.

"Such a love is my anchor of safety," he said to himself. "How the old man's heart must have been wrung! He says nothing about all that he has been through; but who could not guess? Well, then, I will be like a son to him; his life shall be made happy. If she cares for me, she will often come to spend the day with him. That grand Comtesse de Restaud is a heartless thing; she would make her father into her hall porter. Dear Delphine! she is kinder to the old man; she is worthy to be loved. Ah! this evening I shall be very happy!"

He took out his watch and admired it.

"I have had nothing but success! If two people mean to love each other forever, they may help each other, and I can take this. Besides, I shall succeed, and I will repay her a hundredfold. There is nothing criminal in this *liaison*; nothing that could cause the most austere moralist to frown.

How many respectable people contract similar unions! We deceive nobody; it is deception that makes a position humiliating. If you lie, you lower yourself at once. She and her husband have lived apart for a long while. Besides, how if I called upon that Alsatian to resign a wife whom he cannot make happy?"

Rastignac's battle with himself went on for a long while; and though the scruples of youth inevitably gained the day, an irresistible curiosity led him, about half-past four, to return to the Maison Vauquer through the gathering dusk.

Bianchon had given Vautrin an emetic, reserving the contents of the stomach for chemical analysis at the hospital. Mlle. Michonneau's officious alacrity had still further strengthened his suspicions of her. Vautrin, moreover, had recovered so quickly that it was impossible not to suspect some plot against the leader of all frolics at the lodging-house. Vautrin was standing in front of the stove in the dining-room when Rastignac came in. All the lodgers were assembled sooner than usual by the news of young Taillefer's duel. They were anxious to hear any detail about the affair, and to talk over the probable change in Victorine's prospects. Old Goriot alone was absent, but the rest were chatting. No sooner did Eugène come into the room than his eyes met the inscrutable gaze of Vautrin. It was the same look that had read his thoughts before—the look that had such power to waken evil thoughts in his heart. He shuddered.

"Well, dear boy," said the escaped convict, "I am likely to cheat death for a good while yet. According to these ladies, I have had a stroke that would have felled an ox, and come off with flying colors."

"A bull you might say," cried the widow.

"You really might be sorry to see me still alive," said Vautrin in Rastignac's ear, thinking that he guessed the student's thoughts. "You must be mighty sure of yourself."

"Mlle. Michonneau was talking the day before yesterday about a gentleman nicknamed Trompe-la-Mort," said Bian-

chon; "and, upon my word, that name would do very well for you."

Vautrin seemed thunderstruck. He turned pale, and staggered back. He turned his magnetic glance, like a ray of vivid light, on Mlle. Michonneau; the old maid shrank and trembled under the influence of that strong will, and collapsed into a chair. The mask of good-nature had dropped from the convict's face; from the unmistakable ferocity of that sinister look, Poirot felt that the old maid was in danger, and hastily stepped between them. None of the lodgers understood this scene in the least, they looked on in mute amazement. There was a pause. Just then there was a sound of tramping feet outside; there were soldiers there, it seemed, for there was a ring of several rifles on the pavement of the street. Collin was mechanically looking round the walls for a way of escape, when four men entered by way of the sitting-room.

"In the name of the King and the Law!" said an officer, but the words were almost lost in a murmur of astonishment.

Silence fell on the room. The lodgers made way for three of the men, who had each a hand on a cocked pistol in a side pocket. Two policemen, who followed the detectives, kept the entrance to the sitting-room, and two more appeared in the doorway that gave access to the staircase. A sound of footsteps came from the garden, and again the rifles of several soldiers rang on the cobblestones under the window. All chance of salvation by flight was cut off for Trompe-la-Mort, to whom all eyes instinctively turned. The chief walked straight up to him, and commenced operations by giving him a sharp blow on the head, so that the wig fell off, and Collin's face was revealed in all its ugliness. There was a terrible suggestion of strength mingled with cunning in the short, brick-red crop of hair, the whole head was in harmony with his powerful frame, and at that moment the fires of hell seemed to gleam from his eyes. In that flash the real Vautrin shone forth, revealed at once before them all; they understood his past, his present, and fu-

ture, his pitiless doctrines, his actions, the religion of his own good pleasure, the majesty with which his cynicism and contempt for mankind invested him, the physical strength of an organization proof against all trials. The blood flew to his face, and his eyes glared like the eyes of a wildcat. He started back with savage energy and a fierce growl that drew exclamations of alarm from the lodgers. At that leonine start the police caught at their pistols under cover of the general clamor. Collin saw the gleaming muzzles of the weapons, saw his danger, and instantly gave proof of a power of the highest order. There was something horrible and majestic in the spectacle of the sudden transformation in his face; he could only be compared to a caldron full of the steam that can send mountains flying, a terrific force dispelled in a moment by a drop of cold water. The drop of water that cooled his wrathful fury was a reflection that flashed across his brain like lightning. He began to smile, and looked down at his wig.

"You are not in the politest of humors to-day," he remarked to the chief, and he held out his hands to the policemen with a jerk of his head.

"Gentlemen," he said, "put on the bracelets or the handcuffs. I call on those present to witness that I make no resistance."

A murmur of admiration ran through the room at the sudden outpouring like fire and lava flood from this human volcano, and its equally sudden cessation.

"There's a sell for you, master crusher," the convict added, looking at the famous director of police.

"Come, strip!" said he of the Petite Rue Saint-Anne, contemptuously.

"Why?" asked Collin. "There are ladies present; I deny nothing, and surrender."

He paused, and looked round the room like an orator who is about to overwhelm his audience.

"Take this down, Daddy Lachapelle," he went on, addressing a little, white-haired old man who had seated him-

self at the end of the table; and, after drawing a printed form from a portfolio, was proceeding to draw up a document. "I acknowledge myself to be Jacques Collin, otherwise known as Trompe-la-Mort, condemned to twenty years' penal servitude, and I have just proved that I have come fairly by my nickname.—If I had as much as raised my hand," he went on, addressing the other lodgers, "those three sneaking wretches yonder would have drawn claret on Mamma Vauquer's domestic hearth. The rogues have laid their heads together to set a trap for me."

Mme. Vauquer felt sick and faint at these words.

"Good Lord!" she cried, "this does give one a turn; and me at the Gaîté with him only last night!" she said to Sylvie.

"Summon your philosophy, mamma," Collin resumed. "Is it a misfortune to have sat in my box at the Gaîté yesterday evening? After all, are you better than we are? The brand upon our shoulders is less shameful than the brand set on your hearts, you flabby members of a society rotten to the core. Not the best man among you could stand up to me." His eyes rested upon Rastignac, to whom he spoke with a pleasant smile that seemed strangely at variance with the savage expression in his eyes.—"Our little bargain still holds good, dear boy; you can accept any time you like! Do you understand?" And he sang:

"A charming girl is my Fanchette
In her simplicity."

"Don't you trouble yourself," he went on; "I can get in my money. They are too much afraid of me to swindle me."

The convicts' prison, its language and customs, its sudden sharp transitions from the humorous to the horrible, its appalling grandeur, its triviality and its dark depths, were all revealed in turn by the speaker's discourse; he seemed to be no longer a man, but the type and mouthpiece of a degenerate race, a brutal, supple, clear-headed race of sav-

ages. In one moment Collin became the poet of an inferno, wherein all thoughts and passions that move human nature (save repentance) find a place. He looked about him like a fallen archangel who is for war to the end. Rastignac lowered his eyes, and acknowledged this kinship claimed by crime as an expiation of his own evil thoughts.

"Who betrayed me?" said Collin, and his terrible eyes travelled round the room. Suddenly they rested on Mlle. Michonneau.

"It was you, old cat!" he said. "That sham stroke of apoplexy was your doing, lynx eyes! . . . Two words from me, and your throat would be cut in less than a week, but I forgive you, I am a Christian. You did not sell me either. But who did?— Aha! you may rummage upstairs," he shouted, hearing the police officers opening his cupboards and taking possession of his effects. "The nest is empty, the birds flew away yesterday, and you will be none the wiser. My ledgers are here," he said, tapping his forehead. "Now I know who sold me! It could only be that blackguard Fil-de-Soie. That is who it was, old catchpoll, eh?" he said, turning to the chief. "It was timed so neatly to get the banknotes up above there. There is nothing left for you—spies! As for Fil-de-Soie, he will be under the daisies in less than a fortnight, even if you were to tell off the whole force to protect him. How much did you give the Michonnette?" he asked of the police officers. "A thousand crowns? Oh, you Ninon in decay, Pompadour in tatters, Venus of the graveyard, I was worth more than that! If you had given me warning, you should have had six thousand francs. Ah! you had no suspicion of that, old trafficker in flesh and blood, or I should have had the preference. Yes, I would have given six thousand francs to save myself an inconvenient journey and some loss of money," he said, as they fastened the handcuffs on his wrists. "These folk will amuse themselves by dragging out this business till the end of time to keep me idle! If they were to send me straight to jail, I should soon be

back at my old tricks in spite of the duffers at the Quai des Orfèvres. Down yonder they would all turn themselves inside out to help their general—their good Trompela-Mort—to get clear away. Is there a single one among you that can say, as I can, that he has ten thousand brothers ready to do anything for him?" he asked proudly. "There is some good there," he said, tapping his heart; "I have never betrayed any one!—Look you here, you slut," he said to the old maid, "they are all afraid of me, do you see? but the sight of you turns them sick. Rake in your gains."

He was silent for a moment, and looked round at the lodgers' faces.

"What dolts you are, all of you! Have you never seen a convict before? A convict of Collin's stamp, whom you see before you, is a man less weak-kneed than others; he lifts up his voice against the colossal fraud of the Social Contract, as Jean Jacques did, whose pupil he is proud to declare himself. In short, I stand here single-handed against a Government and a whole subsidized machinery of tribunals and police, and I am a match for them all."

"Ye gods!" cried the painter, "what a magnificent sketch one might make of him!"

"Look here, you gentleman-in-waiting to his highness the gibbet, master of ceremonies to the widow" (a nickname full of sombre poetry, given by prisoners to the guillotine), "be a good fellow, and tell me if it really was Fil-de-Soie who sold me. I don't want him to suffer for some one else, that would not be fair."

But before the chief had time to answer, the rest of the party returned from making their investigations upstairs. Everything had been opened and inventoried. A few words passed between them and the chief, and the official preliminaries were complete.

"Gentlemen," said Collin, addressing the lodgers, "they will take me away directly. You have all made my stay among you very agreeable, and I shall look back upon it

with gratitude. Receive my adieux, and permit me to send you figs from Provence."

He advanced a step or two, and then turned to look once more at Rastignac.

"Good-by, Eugène," he said, in a sad and gentle tone, a strange transition from his previous rough and stern manner. "If you should be hard up, I have left you a devoted friend," and, in spite of his shackles, he managed to assume a posture of defence, called, "One! two!" like a fencing master, and lunged. "If anything goes wrong, apply in that quarter. Man and money, all at your service."

The strange speaker's manner was sufficiently burlesque, so that no one but Rastignac knew that there was a serious meaning underlying the pantomime.

As soon as the police, soldiers, and detectives had left the house, Sylvie, who was rubbing her mistress's temples with vinegar, looked round at the bewildered lodgers.

"Well," said she, "he was a man, he was, for all that."

Her words broke the spell. Every one had been too much excited, too much moved by very various feelings to speak. But now the lodgers began to look at each other, and then all eyes were turned at once on Mlle. Michonneau, a thin, shrivelled, dead-alive, mummy-like figure crouching by the stove; her eyes were downcast, as if she feared that the green eye-shade could not shut out the expression of those faces from her. This figure and the feeling of repulsion she had so long excited were explained all at once. A smothered murmur filled the room; it was so unanimous that it seemed as if the same feeling of loathing had pitched all the voices in one key. Mlle. Michonneau heard it, and did not stir. It was Bianchon who was the first to move; he bent over his neighbor, and said in a low voice, "If that creature is going to stop here, and have dinner with us, I shall clear out."

In the twinkling of an eye it was clear that every one in the room, save Poiret, was of the medical student's opinion,

so that the latter, strong in the support of the majority, went up to that elderly person.

"You are more intimate with Mlle. Michonneau than the rest of us," he said; "speak to her, make her understand that she must go, and go at once."

"At once!" echoed Poiret in amazement.

Then he went across to the crouching figure, and spoke a few words in her ear.

"I have paid beforehand for the quarter; I have as much right to be here as any one else," she said, with a viperous look at the boarders.

"Never mind that! we will club together and pay you the money back," said Rastignac.

"Monsieur is taking Collin's part," she said, with a questioning, malignant glance at the law student; "it is not difficult to guess why."

Eugène started forward at the words, as if he meant to spring upon her and wring her neck. That glance, and the depths of treachery that it revealed, had been a hideous enlightenment.

"Let her alone!" cried the boarders.

Rastignac folded his arms, and was silent.

"Let us have no more of Mlle. Judas," said the painter, turning to Mme. Vauquer. "If you don't show the Michonneau the door, madame, we shall all leave your shop, and wherever we go we shall say that there are only convicts and spies left there. If you do the other thing, we will hold our tongues about the business; for when all is said and done, it might happen in the best society until they brand them on the forehead, when they send them to the hulks. They ought not to let convicts go about Paris disguised like decent citizens, so as to carry on their antics like a set of rascally humbugs, which they are."

At this Mme. Vauquer recovered miraculously. She sat up and folded her arms; her eyes were wide open now, and there was no sign of tears in them.

"Why, do you really mean to be the ruin of my estab-

lishment, my dear sir? There is M. Vautrin— Goodness," she cried, interrupting herself, "I can't help calling him by the name he passed himself off by for an honest man! There is one room to let already, and you want me to turn out two more lodgers in the middle of the season, when no one is moving—"

"Gentlemen, let us take our hats and go and dine at Flicoteaux's in the Place Sorbonne," cried Bianchon.

Mme. Vauquer glanced round, and saw in a moment on which side her interest lay. She waddled across to Mlle. Michonneau.

"Come, now," she said; "you would not be the ruin of my establishment, would you, eh? There's a dear, kind soul. You see what a pass these gentlemen have brought me to; just go up to your room for this evening."

"Never a bit of it!" cried the boarders. "She must go, and go this minute!"

"But the poor lady has had no dinner," said Poiret, with piteous entreaty.

"She can go and dine where she likes," shouted several voices.

"Turn her out, the spy!"

"Turn them both out! Spies!"

"Gentlemen," cried Poiret, his heart swelling with the courage that love gives to the ovine male, "respect the weaker sex."

"Spies are of no sex!" said the painter.

"A precious sexorama!"

"Turn her into the streetorama!"

"Gentlemen, this is not manners! If you turn people out of the house, it ought not to be done so unceremoniously and with no notice at all. We have paid our money, and we are not going," said Poiret, putting on his cap, and taking a chair beside Mlle. Michonneau, with whom Mme. Vauquer was remonstrating.

"Naughty boy!" said the painter, with a comical look; "run away, naughty little boy!"

"Look here," said Bianchon; "if you do not go, all the rest of us will," and the boarders, to a man, made for the sitting-room door.

"Oh! mademoiselle, what is to be done?" cried Mme. Vauquer. "I am a ruined woman. You can't stay here; they will go further, do something violent."

Mlle. Michonneau rose to her feet.

"She is going!—She is not going!—She is going!—No, she isn't."

These alternate exclamations, and a suggestion of hostile intentions, borne out by the behavior of the insurgents, compelled Mlle. Michonneau to take her departure. She made some stipulations, speaking in a low voice in her hostess's ear, and then—"I shall go to Mme. Buneaud's," she said, with a threatening look.

"Go where you please, mademoiselle," said Mme. Vauquer, who regarded this choice of an opposition establishment as an atrocious insult. "Go and lodge with the Buneaud; the wine would give a cat the colic, and the food is cheap and nasty."

The boarders stood aside in two rows to let her pass; not a word was spoken. Poiret looked so wistfully after Mlle. Michonneau, and so artlessly revealed that he was in two minds whether to go or stay, that the boarders, in their joy at being quit of Mlle. Michonneau, burst out laughing at the sight of him.

"Hist!—st!—st! Poiret," shouted the painter. "Hallo! I say, Poiret, hallo!" The employé from the Muséum began to sing:

"Partant pour la Syrie,
Le jeune et beau Dunois . . ."

"Get along with you; you must be dying to go, *trahit sua quemque voluptas!*" said Bianchon.

"Every one to his taste—free rendering from Virgil," said the tutor.

Mlle. Michonneau made a movement as if to take Poiret's arm, with an appealing glance that he could not resist. The

two went out together, the old maid leaning upon him, and there was a burst of applause, followed by peals of laughter.

"Bravo, Poiret!"

"Who would have thought it of old Poiret!"

"Apollo Poiret!"

"Mars Poiret!"

"Intrepid Poiret!"

A messenger came in at that moment with a letter for Mme. Vauquer, who read it through, and collapsed in her chair.

"The house might as well be burned down at once," cried she, "if there are to be any more of these thunderbolts! Young Taillefer died at three o'clock this afternoon. It serves me right for wishing well to those ladies at that poor young man's expense. Mme. Couture and Victorine want me to send their things, because they are going to live with her father. M. Taillefer allows his daughter to keep old Mme. Couture with her as lady companion. Four rooms to let! and five lodgers gone! . . ."

She sat up, and seemed about to burst into tears.

"Bad luck has come to lodge here, I think," she cried.

Once more there came a sound of wheels from the street outside.

"What! another windfall for somebody!" was Sylvie's comment.

But it was Goriot who came in, looking so radiant, so flushed with happiness, that he seemed to have grown young again.

"Goriot in a cab!" cried the boarders; "the world is coming to an end."

The good soul made straight for Eugène, who was standing rapt in thought in a corner, and laid a hand on the young man's arm.

"Come," he said, with gladness in his eyes.

"Then you haven't heard the news?" said Eugène. "Vautrin was an escaped convict; they have just arrested him; and young Taillefer is dead."

"Very well, but what business is it of ours?" replied old Goriot. "I am going to dine with my daughter *in your house*, do you understand? She is expecting you. Come!"

He carried off Rastignac with him by main force, and they departed in as great a hurry as a pair of eloping lovers.

"Now, let us have dinner," cried the painter, and every one drew his chair to the table.

"Well, I never!" said the portly Sylvie. "Nothing goes right to-day! The haricot mutton has caught! Bah! you will have to eat it, burned as it is, more's the pity!"

Mme. Vauquer was so dispirited that she could not say a word as she looked round the table and saw only ten people where eighteen should be; but every one tried to comfort and cheer her. At first the dinner contingent, as was natural, talked about Vautrin and the day's events; but the conversation wound round to such topics of interest as duels, jails, justice, prison life, and alterations that ought to be made in the laws. They soon wandered miles away from Jacques Collin and Victorine and her brother. There might be only ten of them, but they made noise enough for twenty; indeed, there seemed to be more of them than usual; that was the only difference between yesterday and to-day. Indifference to the fate of others is a matter of course in this selfish world, which, on the morrow of a tragedy, seeks among the events of Paris for a fresh sensation for its daily renewed appetite, and this indifference soon gained the upper hand. Mme. Vauquer herself grew calmer under the soothing influence of hope, and the mouthpiece of hope was the portly Sylvie.

That day had gone by like a dream for Eugène, and the sense of unreality lasted into the evening; so that, in spite of his energetic character and clear-headedness, his ideas were a chaos as he sat beside Goriot in the cab. The old man's voice was full of unwonted happiness, but Eugène had been shaken by so many emotions that the words sounded in his ears like words spoken in a dream.

"It was finished this morning! All three of us are going to dine there together, together! Do you understand? I

have not dined with my Delphine, my little Delphine, these four years, and I shall have her for a whole evening! We have been at your lodging the whole time since morning. I have been working like a porter in my shirt sleeves, helping to carry in the furniture. Aha! you don't know what pretty ways she has; at table she will look after me, 'Here, papa, just try this, it is nice.' And I shall not be able to eat. Oh, it is a long while since I have been with her in quiet every-day life as we shall have her."

"It really seems as if the world had been turned upside down."

"Upside down?" repeated old Goriot. "Why, the world has never been so right-side up. I see none but smiling faces in the streets, people who shake hands cordially and embrace each other, people who all look as happy as if they were going to dine with their daughter, and gobble down a nice little dinner that she went with me to order of the chef at the *Café des Anglais*. But, pshaw! with her beside you gall and wormwood would be as sweet as honey."

"I feel as if I were coming back to life again," said Eugène.

"Why, hurry up there!" cried old Goriot, letting down the window in front. "Get on faster; I will give you five fances if you get to the place I told you of in ten minutes' time."

With this prospect before him the cabman crossed Paris with miraculous celerity.

"How that fellow crawls!" said old Goriot.

"But where are you taking me?" Eugène asked him.

"To your own house," said Goriot.

The cab stopped in the *Rue d'Artois*. Old Goriot stepped out first and flung ten francs to the man with the recklessness of a widower returning to bachelor ways.

"Come along upstairs," he said to Rastignac. They crossed a courtyard, and climbed up to the third floor of a new and handsome house. Here they stopped before a door; but before Goriot could ring, it was opened by Thérèse, *Mme. de Nucingen's* maid. Eugène found himself in a

charming set of chambers; an anteroom, a little drawing-room, a bedroom, and a study, looking out upon a garden. The furniture and the decoration of the little drawing-room were of the most daintily charming description, the room was full of soft light, and Delphine rose up from a low chair by the fire and stood before him. She set her fire-screen down on the chimney-piece, and spoke with tenderness in every tone of her voice.

"So we had to go in search of you, sir, you who are so slow to understand!"

Thérèse left the room. The student took Delphine in his arms and held her in a tight clasp, his eyes filled with tears of joy. This last contrast between his present surroundings and the scenes he had just witnessed was too much for Rastignac's over-wrought nerves, after the day's strain and excitement that had wearied heart and brain; he was almost overcome by it.

"I felt sure myself that he loved you," murmured old Goriot, while Eugène lay back bewildered on the sofa, utterly unable to speak a word or to reason out how and why the magic wand had been waved to bring about this final transformation scene.

"But you must see your rooms," said Mme. de Nucingen. She took his hand and led him into a room carpeted and furnished like her own; indeed, down to the smallest details, it was a reproduction in miniature of Delphine's apartment.

"There is no bed," said Rastignac.

"No, monsieur," she answered, reddening, and pressing his hand. Eugène, looking at her, understood, young though he yet was, how deeply modesty is implanted in the heart of a woman who loves.

"You are one of those beings whom we cannot choose but to adore forever," he said in her ear. "Yes, the deeper and truer love is, the more mysterious and closely veiled it should be; I can dare to say so, since we understand each other so well. No one shall learn our secret."

"Oh! so I am nobody, I suppose," growled the father.

"You know quite well that 'we' means you."

"Ah! that is what I wanted. You will not mind me, will you? I shall go and come like a good fairy who makes himself felt everywhere without being seen, shall I not? Eh, Delphinette, Ninette, Dedel—was it not a good idea of mine to say to you, 'There are some nice rooms to let in the Rue d'Artois; let us furnish them for him'? And she would not hear of it! Ah! your happiness has been all my doing. I am the author of your happiness and of your existence. Fathers must always be giving if they would be happy themselves; always giving—they would not be fathers else."

"Was that how it happened?" asked Eugène.

"Yes. She would not listen to me. She was afraid that people would talk, as if the rubbish that they say about you were to be compared with happiness! Why, all women dream of doing what she has done—"

Father Goriot found himself without an audience, for Mme. de Nucingen had led Rastignac into the study; he heard a kiss given and taken, low though the sound was.

The study was furnished as elegantly as the other rooms, and nothing was wanting there.

"Have we guessed your wishes rightly?" she asked, as they returned to the drawing-room for dinner.

"Yes," he said, "only too well, alas! For all this luxury so well carried out, this realization of pleasant dreams, the elegance that satisfies all the romantic fancies of youth, appeals to me so strongly that I cannot but feel that it is my rightful possession, but I cannot accept it from you, and I am too poor as yet to—"

"Ah! ah! you say me nay already," she said with arch imperiousness, and a charming little pout of the lips, a woman's way of laughing away scruples.

But Eugène had submitted so lately to that solemn self-questioning, and Vautrin's arrest had so plainly shown him the depths of the pit that lay ready to his feet, that the instincts of generosity and honor had been strengthened in him,

and he could not allow himself to be coaxed into abandoning his high-minded determinations. Profound melancholy filled his mind.

"Do you really mean to refuse?" said Mme. de Nucingen. "And do you know what such a refusal means? That you are not sure of yourself, that you do not dare to bind yourself to me. Are you really afraid of betraying my affection? If you love me, if I—love you, why should you shrink back from such a slight obligation? If you but knew what a pleasure it has been to see after all the arrangements of this bachelor establishment, you would not hesitate any longer, you would ask me to forgive you for your hesitation. I had some money that belonged to you, and I have made good use of it, that is all. You mean this for magnanimity, but it is very little of you. You are asking me for far more than this. . . . ("Ah!" she cried, as Eugène's passionate glance was turned on her), and you are making difficulties about the merest trifles. Oh, if you feel no love whatever for me, refuse by all means. My fate hangs on a word from you. Speak!—Father," she said after a pause, "make him listen to reason. Can he imagine that I am less nice than he is on the point of honor?"

Old Goriot was looking on and listening to this pretty quarrel with a placid smile, as if he had found some balm for all the sorrows of life.

"Child that you are!" she cried again, catching Eugène's hand. "You are just beginning life; you find barriers at the outset that many a man finds insurmountable; a woman's hand opens the way, and you shrink back! Why, you are sure to succeed! You will have a brilliant future. Success is written on that broad forehead of yours, and will you not be able to repay me my loan of to-day? Did not a lady in olden times arm her knight with sword and helmet and coat of mail, and find him a charger, so that he might fight for her in the tournament? Well, then, Eugène, these things that I offer you are the weapons of this age; every one who means to be something must have such tools as these. A

pretty place your garret must be if it is like papa's room! See, dinner is waiting all this time. Do you want to make me unhappy?—Why don't you answer?" she said, shaking his hand. "Mon Dieu! papa, make up his mind for him, or I will go away and never see him any more."

"I will make up your mind," said Goriot, coming down from the clouds. "Now, my dear M. Eugène, the next thing is to borrow money of the Jews, isn't it?"

"There is positively no help for it," said Eugène.

"All right, I will give you credit," said the other, drawing out a cheap leather pocket-book, much the worse for wear. "I have turned Jew myself; I paid for everything; here are the invoices. You do not owe a penny for anything here. It did not come to very much—five thousand francs at most, and I am going to loan you the money myself. I am not a woman—you cannot refuse me. You shall give me a receipt on a scrap of paper, and you can return it some time or other."

Delphine and Eugène looked at each other in amazement, tears sprang to their eyes. Rastignac held out his hand and grasped Goriot's warmly.

"Well, what is all this about? Are you not my children?"

"Oh! my poor father," said Mme. de Nucingen, "how did you do it?"

"Ah! now you ask me. When I made up my mind to move him nearer to you, and saw you buying things as if they were wedding presents, I said to myself, 'She will never be able to pay for them.' The attorney says that those law proceedings will last quite six months before your husband can be made to disgorge your fortune. Well and good. I sold out my property in the funds that brought in thirteen hundred and fifty livres a year, and bought a safe annuity of twelve hundred francs a year for fifteen thousand francs. Then I paid your tradesmen out of the rest of the capital. As for me, children, I have a room upstairs for which I pay fifty crowns a year; I can live like a prince on two francs a

day, and still have something left over. I shall not have to spend anything much on clothes, for I never wear anything out. This fortnight past I have been laughing in my sleeve, thinking to myself, 'How happy they are going to be!' and—well, now, are you not happy?"

"Oh, papa! papa!" cried Mme. de Nucingen, springing to her father, who took her on his knee. She covered him with kisses, her fair hair brushed his cheek, her tears fell on the withered face that had grown so bright and radiant.

"Dear father, what a father you are! No, there is not another father like you under the sun. If Eugène loved you before, what must he feel for you now?"

"Why, children! why, Delphinette!" cried Goriot, who had not felt his daughter's heart beat against his breast for ten years, "do you want me to die of joy? My poor heart will break! Come, Monsieur Eugène, we are quits already." And the old man strained her to his breast with such fierce and passionate force that she cried out.

"Oh! you are hurting me!" she said.

"I am hurting you!" He grew pale at the words. The pain expressed in his face seemed greater than it is given to humanity to know. The agony of this Christ of paternity can only be compared with the masterpieces of those princes of the palette who have left for us the record of their visions of an agony suffered for a whole world by the Saviour of men. Old Goriot pressed his lips very gently against the waist that his fingers had grasped too roughly.

"Oh! no, no," he cried. "I have not hurt you, have I?" and his smile seemed to repeat the question. "*You* have hurt me with that cry just now.—The things cost rather more than that," he said in her ear, with another gentle kiss, "but I had to deceive him about it, or he would have been angry."

Eugène sat dumb with amazement in the presence of this inexhaustible love; he gazed at Goriot, and his face betrayed the artless admiration which shapes the beliefs of youth.

"I will be worthy of all this," he cried.

"Oh! my Eugène, that is nobly said," and Mme. de Nucingen kissed the law student on the forehead.

"He gave up Mlle. Taillefer and her millions for you," said old Goriot. "Yes, the little thing was in love with you, and now that her brother is dead she is as rich as Croesus."

"Oh! why did you tell her?" cried Rastignac.

"Eugène," Delphine said in his ear, "I have one regret now this evening. Ah! how I will love you! and forever!"

"This is the happiest day I have had since you two were married!" cried Goriot. "God may send me any suffering, so long as I do not suffer through you, and I can still say, 'In this short month of February I had more happiness than other men have in their whole lives.'—Look at me, Fifine!" he said to his daughter. "She is very beautiful, is she not? Tell me, now, have you seen many women with that pretty soft color—that little dimple of hers? No, I thought not. Ah, well, and but for me this lovely woman would never have been. And very soon happiness will make her a thousand times lovelier, happiness through you. I could give up my place in heaven to you, neighbor, if needs be, and go down to hell instead. Come, let us have dinner," he added, scarcely knowing what he said, "everything is ours."

"Poor dear father!"

He rose and went over to her, and took her face in his hands, and set a kiss on the plaits of hair. "If you only knew, little one, how happy you can make me—how little it takes to make me happy! Will you come and see me sometimes? I shall be just above, so it is only a step. Promise me, say that you will!"

"Yes, dear father."

"Say it again."

"Yes, I will, my kind father."

"Hush, hush! I should make you say it a hundred times over if I followed my own wishes. Let us have dinner."

The three behaved like children that evening, and old Goriot's spirits were certainly not the least wild. He lay at his daughter's feet, kissed them, gazed into her eyes,

rubbed his head against her dress; in short, no young lover could have been more extravagant or more tender.

"You see!" Delphine said with a look at Eugène, "so long as my father is with us, he monopolizes me. He will be rather in the way sometimes."

Eugène had himself already felt certain twinges of jealousy, and could not blame this speech that contained the germ of all ingratitude.

"And when will the rooms be ready?" asked Eugène, looking round. "We must all leave them this evening, I suppose."

"Yes, but to-morrow you must come and dine with me," she answered, with an eloquent glance. "It is our night at the Italiens."

"I shall go to the pit," said her father.

It was midnight. Mme. de Nucingen's carriage was waiting for her, and old Goriot and the student walked back to the Maison Vauquer, talking of Delphine, and warming over their talk till there grew up a curious rivalry between the two violent passions. Eugène could not help seeing that the father's self-less love was deeper and more steadfast than his own. For this worshipper Delphine was always pure and fair, and her father's adoration drew its fervor from a whole past as well as a future of love.

They found Mme. Vauquer by the stove, with Sylvie and Christophe to keep her company; the old landlady, sitting like Marius among the ruins of Carthage, was waiting for the two lodgers that yet remained to her, and bemoaning her lot with the sympathetic Sylvie. Tasso's lamentations as recorded in Byron's poem are undoubtedly eloquent, but for sheer force of truth they fall far short of the widow's cry from the depths.

"Only three cups of coffee in the morning, Sylvie! Oh dear! to have your house emptied in this way is enough to break your heart. What is life, now my lodgers are gone? Nothing at all. Just think of it! It is just as if all the furniture had been taken out of the house, and your furniture

is your life. How have I offended Heaven to draw down all this trouble upon me? And haricot beans and potatoes laid in for twenty people! The police in my house, too! We shall have to live on potatoes now, and Christophe will have to go!"

The Savoyard, who was fast asleep, suddenly woke up at this, and said, "Madame?" questioningly.

"Poor fellow!" said Sylvie, "he is like a dog."

"In the dead season, too! Nobody is moving now. I would like to know where the lodgers are to drop down from. It drives me distracted. And that old witch of a Michonneau goes and takes Poiret with her! What can she have done to him to make him so fond of her? He runs about after her like a little dog."

"Lord!" said Sylvie, flinging up her head, "those old maids are up to all sorts of tricks."

"There's that poor M. Vautrin that they made out to be a convict," the widow went on. "Well, you know that is too much for me, Sylvie; I can't bring myself to believe it. Such a lively man as he was, and paid fifteen francs a month for his coffee of an evening, paid you every penny on the nail too."

"And open-handed he was!" said Christophe.

"There is some mistake," said Sylvie.

"Why, no there isn't! he said so himself!" said Mme. Vauquer. "And to think that all these things have happened in my house, and in a quarter where you never see a cat go by. On my word as an honest woman, it's like a dream. For, look here, we saw Louis XVI. meet with his mishap; we saw the fall of the Emperor; and we saw him come back and fall again; there was nothing out of the way in all that, but lodging-houses are not liable to revolutions. You can do without a king, but you must eat all the same; and so long as a decent woman, a de Confians born and bred, will give you all sorts of good things for dinner, nothing short of the end of the world ought to—but there, it is the end of the world, that is just what it is!"

"And to think that Mlle. Michonneau who made all this

mischievous is to have a thousand crowns a year for it, so I hear," cried Sylvie.

"Don't speak of her, she is a wicked woman!" said Mme. Vauquer. "She is going to the Buneaud, who charges less than cost. But the Buneaud is capable of anything; she must have done frightful things, robbed and murdered people in her time. *She* ought to be put in jail for life instead of that poor dear—"

Eugène and Goriot rang the door-bell at that moment.

"Ah! here are my two faithful lodgers," said the widow, sighing.

But the two faithful lodgers, who retained but shadowy recollections of the misfortunes of their lodging-house, announced to their hostess without more ado that they were about to remove to the Chaussée d'Antin.

"Sylvie!" cried the widow, "this is the last straw.—Gentlemen, this will be the death of me! It has quite upset me! There's a weight on my chest! I am ten years older for this day! Upon my word, I shall go out of my senses! And what is to be done with the haricots?—Oh, well, if I am to be left here all by myself, you shall go to-morrow, Christophe.—Good-night, gentlemen," and she went.

"What is the matter now?" Eugène inquired of Sylvie.

"Lord! everybody is going about his business, and that has addled her wits. There! she is crying upstairs. It will do her good to snivel a bit. It's the first time she has cried since I've been with her."

By the morning, Mme. Vauquer, to use her own expression, had "made up her mind to it." True, she still wore a doleful countenance, as might be expected of a woman who had lost all her lodgers, and whose manner of life had been suddenly revolutionized, but she had all her wits about her. Her grief was genuine and profound; it was real pain of mind, for her purse had suffered, the routine of her existence had been broken. A lover's farewell glance at his lady-love's window is not more mournful than Mme. Vauquer's survey of the empty places round her table. Eugène admin-

istered comfort, telling the widow that Bianchon, whose term of residence at the hospital was about to expire, would doubtless take his (Rastignac's) place; that the official from the Muséum had often expressed a desire to have Mme. Cousture's rooms; and that in a very few days her household would be on the old footing.

"God send it may, my dear sir! but bad luck has come to lodge here. There'll be a death in the house before ten days are out, you'll see," and she gave a lugubrious look round the dining-room. "Whose turn will it be, I wonder?"

"It is just as well that we are moving out," said Eugène to old Goriot in a low voice.

"Madame," said Sylvie, running in with a scared face, "I have not seen *Mistigris* these three days."

"Ah! well, if my cat is dead, if *he* has gone and left us, I—"

The poor woman could not finish her sentence; she clasped her hands and hid her face on the back of her armchair, quite overcome by this dreadful portent.

By twelve o'clock, when the postman reaches that quarter, Eugène received a letter. The dainty envelope bore the Beauséant arms on the seal, and contained an invitation to the Vicomtesse's great ball, which had been talked of in Paris for a month. A little note for Eugène was slipped in with the card.

"I think, Monsieur, that you will undertake with pleasure to interpret my sentiments to Mme. de Nucingen, so I am sending the card for which you asked me to you. I shall be delighted to make the acquaintance of Mme. de Restaud's sister. Pray introduce that charming lady to me, and do not let her monopolize all your affection, for you owe me not a little in return for mine.

"VICOMTESSE DE BEAUSÉANT."

"Well," said Eugène to himself, as he read the note a second time, "Mme. de Beauséant says pretty plainly that she does not want the Baron de Nucingen."

He went to Delphine at once in his joy. He had procured this pleasure for her, and doubtless he would receive the price of it. Mme. de Nucingen was dressing. Rastignac waited in her boudoir, enduring as best he might the natural impatience of an eager temperament for the reward desired and withheld for a year. Such sensations are only known once in a life. The first woman to whom a man is drawn, if she is really a woman—that is to say, if she appears to him amid the splendid accessories that form a necessary background to life in the world of Paris—will never have a rival.

Love in Paris is a thing distinct and apart; for in Paris neither men nor women are the dupes of the commonplaces by which people seek to throw a veil over their motives, or to parade a fine affectation of disinterestedness in their sentiments. In this country within a country, it is not merely required of a woman that she should satisfy the senses and the soul; she knows perfectly well that she has still greater obligations to discharge, that she must fulfil the countless demands of a vanity that enters into every fibre of that living organism called society. Love, for her, is above all things, and by its very nature, a vainglorious, brazen-fronted, ostentatious, thriftless charlatan. If at the Court of Louis XIV. there was not a woman but envied Mlle. de la Vallière the reckless devotion of passion that led the grand monarch to tear the priceless ruffles at his wrists in order to assist the entry of a Duc de Vermandois into the world—what can you expect of the rest of society? You must have youth and wealth and rank; nay, you must, if possible, have more than these, for the more incense you bring with you to burn at the shrine of the god, the more favorably will he regard the worshipper. Love is a religion, and his cult must in the nature of things be more costly than those of all other deities; Love the Spoiler stays for a moment, and then passes on; like the urchin of the streets, his course may be traced by the ravages that he has made. The wealth of feeling and imagination is the poetry of the garret; how should love exist there without that wealth?

If there are exceptions who do not subscribe to these Draconian laws of the Parisian code, they are solitary examples. Such souls live so far out of the main current that they are not borne away by the doctrines of society; they dwell beside some clear spring of everflowing water, without seeking to leave the green shade; happy to listen to the echoes of the infinite in everything around them and in their own souls, waiting in patience to take their flight for heaven, while they look with pity upon those of earth.

Rastignac, like most young men who have been early impressed by the circumstance of power and grandeur, meant to enter the lists fully armed; the burning ambition of conquest possessed him already; perhaps he was conscious of his powers, but as yet he knew neither the end to which his ambition was to be directed, nor the means of attaining it. In default of the pure and sacred love that fills a life, ambition may become something very noble, subduing to itself every thought of personal interest, and setting as the end—the greatness, not of one man, but of a whole nation.

But the student had not yet reached the time of life when a man surveys the whole course of existence and judges it soberly. Hitherto he had scarcely so much as shaken off the spell of the fresh and gracious influences that envelop a childhood in the country, like green leaves and grass. He had hesitated on the brink of the Parisian Rubicon, and, in spite of the prickings of ambition, he still clung to a lingering tradition of an old ideal—the peaceful life of the noble in his chateau. But yesterday evening, at the sight of his rooms, those scruples had vanished. He had learned what it was to enjoy the material advantages of fortune, as he had already enjoyed the social advantages of birth; he ceased to be a provincial from that moment, and slipped naturally and easily into a position which opened up a prospect of a brilliant future.

So, as he waited for Delphine, in the pretty boudoir, where he felt that he had a certain right to be, he felt himself so far away from the Rastignac who came back to Paris

a year ago, that, turning some power of inner vision upon this latter, he asked himself whether that past self bore any resemblance to the Rastignac of that moment.

"Madame is in her room," Thérèse came to tell him. The woman's voice made him start.

He found Delphine lying back in her low chair by the fireside, looking fresh and bright. The sight of her among the flowing draperies of muslin suggested some beautiful tropical flower, where the fruit is set amid the blossom.

"Well," she said, with a tremor in her voice, "here you are."

"Guess what I bring for you," said Eugène, sitting down beside her. He took possession of her arm to kiss her hand.

Mme. de Nucingen gave a joyful start as she saw the card. She turned to Eugène; there were tears in her eyes as she flung her arms about his neck, and drew him toward her in a frenzy of gratified vanity.

"And I owe this happiness to you—to *thee*" (she whispered the more intimate word in his ear); "but Thérèse is in my dressing-room, let us be prudent.—This happiness—yes, for I may call it so, when it comes to me through *you*—is surely more than a triumph for self-love? No one has been willing to introduce me into that set. Perhaps just now I may seem to you to be frivolous, petty, shallow, like a Parisienne, but remember, my friend, that I am ready to give up all for you; and that if I long more than ever for an entrance into the Faubourg Saint-Germain, it is because I shall meet you there."

"Mme. de Beauséant's note seems to say very plainly that she does not expect to see the *Baron* de Nucingen at her ball; don't you think so?" said Eugène.

"Why, yes," said the Baroness as she returned the letter. "Those women have a talent for insolence. But it is of no consequence, I shall go. My sister is sure to be there, and sure to be very beautifully dressed.—Eugène," she went on, lowering her voice, "she will go to dispel ugly suspicions. You do not know the things that people are saying

about her! Only this morning Nucingen came to tell me that they had been discussing her at the club. Great heavens! on what does a woman's character and the honor of a whole family depend! I feel that I am nearly touched and wounded in my poor sister. According to some people, M. de Trailles must have put his name to bills for a hundred thousand francs, nearly all of them are overdue, and proceedings are threatened. In this predicament, it seems that my sister sold her diamonds to a Jew—the beautiful diamonds that belonged to her husband's mother, Mme. de Restaud the elder—you have seen her wearing them. In fact, nothing else has been talked about for the last two days. So I can see that Anastasie is sure to come to Mme. de Beauséant's ball in tissue of gold, and ablaze with diamonds, to draw all eyes upon her; and I will not be outshone. She has tried to eclipse me all her life; she has never been kind to me, and I have helped her so often, and always had money for her when she had none.—But never mind other people now, to-day I mean to be perfectly happy."

At one o'clock that morning Eugène was still with Mme. de Nucingen. In the midst of their lovers' farewell, a farewell full of hope of bliss to come, she said in a troubled voice, "I am very fearful, superstitious. Give what name you like to my presentiments, but I am afraid that my happiness will be paid for by some horrible catastrophe."

"Child!" said Eugène.

"Ah! have we changed places, and am I the child to-night?" she asked laughingly.

Eugène went back to the Maison Vauquer, never doubting but that he should leave it for good on the morrow; and on the way he fell to dreaming the bright dreams of youth, when the cup of happiness has left its sweetness on the lips.

"Well?" cried Goriot, as Rastignac passed by his door.

"Yes," said Eugène; "I will tell you everything to-morrow."

"Everything, will you not?" cried the old man. "Go to bed. To-morrow our happy life will begin."

Next day, Goriot and Rastignac were ready to leave the lodging-house, and only awaited the good pleasure of a porter to move out of it; but toward noon there was a sound of wheels in the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève, and a carriage stopped before the door of the Maison Vauquer. Mme. de Nucingen alighted, and asked if her father was still in the house, and, receiving an affirmative reply from Sylvie, ran lightly upstairs.

It so happened that Eugène was at home all unknown to his neighbor. At breakfast time he had asked Goriot to superintend the removal of his goods, saying that he would meet him in the Rue d'Artois at four o'clock; but Rastignac's name had been called early on the list at the Ecole de Droit, and he had gone back at once to the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève. No one had seen him come in, for Goriot had gone to find a porter, and the mistress of the house was likewise out. Eugène had thought to pay her himself, for it struck him that if he left this, Goriot in his zeal would probably pay for him. As it was, Eugène went up to his room to see that nothing had been forgotten, and blessed his foresight when he saw the blank bill bearing Vautrin's signature lying in the drawer where he had carelessly thrown it on the day when he had repaid the amount. There was no fire in the grate, so he was about to tear it into little pieces, when he heard a voice speaking in Goriot's room, and the speaker was Delphine! He made no more noise, and stood still to listen, thinking that she should have no secrets from him; but after the first few words, the conversation between the father and daughter was so strange and interesting that it absorbed all his attention.

"Ah! thank heaven that you thought of asking him to give an account of the money settled on me before I was utterly ruined, father. Is it safe to talk?" she added.

"Yes, there is no one in the house," said her father faintly.

"What is the matter with you?" asked Mme. de Nucingen.

"God forgive you! you have just dealt me a staggering blow, child!" said the old man. "You cannot know how much I love you, or you would not have burst in upon me like this, with such news, especially if all is not lost. Has something so important happened that you must come here about it? In a few minutes we should have been in the Rue d'Artois."

"Eh! does one think what one is doing after a catastrophe? It has turned my head. Your attorney has found out the state of things now, but it was bound to come out sooner or later. We shall want your long business experience; and I came to you like a drowning man who catches at a branch. When M. Derville found that Nucingen was throwing all sorts of difficulties in his way, he threatened him with proceedings, and told him plainly that he would soon obtain an order from the President of the Tribunal. So Nucingen came to my room this morning, and asked if I meant to ruin us both. I told him that I knew nothing whatever about it, that I had a fortune, and ought to be put into possession of my fortune, and that my attorney was acting for me in the matter; I said again that I knew absolutely nothing about it, and could not possibly go into the subject with him. Wasn't that what you told me to tell him?"

"Yes, quite right," answered Goriot.

"Well, then," Delphine continued, "he told me all about his affairs. He had just invested all his capital and mine in business speculations; they have only just been started, and very large sums of money are locked up. If I were to compel him to refund my dowry now, he would be forced to file his petition; but if I will wait a year, he undertakes, on his honor, to double or treble my fortune, by investing it in building land, and I shall be mistress at last of the whole of my property. He was speaking the truth, father dear; he frightened me! He asked my pardon for his conduct; he has given me my liberty; I am free to act as I please on condition that I leave him to carry on my business in my

name. To prove his sincerity, he promised that M. Der-ville might inspect the accounts as often as I pleased, so that I might be assured that everything was being conducted properly. In short, he put himself into my power, bound hand and foot. He wishes the present arrangements as to the expenses of housekeeping to continue for two more years, and entreated me not to exceed my allowance. He showed me plainly that it was all that he could do to keep up appearances; he has broken with his opera dancer; he will be compelled to practice the most strict economy (in secret) if he is to bide his time with unshaken credit. I scolded, I did all I could to drive him to desperation, so as to find out more. He showed me his ledgers—he broke down and cried at last. I never saw a man in such a state. He lost his head completely, talked of killing himself, and raved till I felt quite sorry for him.”

“Do you really believe that silly rubbish? . . .” cried her father. “It was all got up for your benefit! I have had to do with Germans in the way of business; honest and straightforward they are pretty sure to be, but when with their simplicity and frankness they are sharpers and hum-bugs as well, they are the worst rogues of all. Your husband is taking advantage of you. As soon as pressure is brought to bear on him he shams dead; he means to be more the master under your name than in his own. He will take advantage of the position to secure himself against the risks of business. He is as sharp as he is treacherous; he is a bad lot! No, no; I am not going to leave my girls behind me without a penny when I go to Père-Lachaise. I know something about business still. He has sunk his money in speculation, he says; very well, then, there is something to show for it—bills, receipts, papers of some sort. Let him produce them, and come to an arrangement with you. We will choose the most promising of his speculations, take them over at our own risk, and have the securities transferred into your name; they shall represent the separate estate of Delphine Goriot, wife of the Baron de Nucingen. Does that fellow

really take us for idiots? Does he imagine that I could stand the idea of your being without fortune, without bread, for forty-eight hours? I would not stand it a day—no, not a night, not a couple of hours! If there had been any foundation for the idea, I should never get over it. What! I have worked hard for forty years, carried sacks on my back, and sweated and pinched and saved all my life for you, my darlings, for you who made the toil and every burden borne for you seem light; and now, my fortune, my whole life, is to vanish in smoke! I should die raving mad if I believed a word of it. By all that's holiest in heaven and earth, we will have this cleared up at once; go through the books, have the whole business looked thoroughly into! I will not sleep, nor rest, nor eat until I have satisfied myself that all your fortune is in existence. Your money is settled upon you, God be thanked! and, luckily, your attorney, Maître Derville, is an honest man. Good Lord! you shall have your snug little million, your fifty thousand francs a year, as long as you live, or I will raise a racket in Paris, I will so! If the Tribunals put upon us, I will appeal to the Chambers. If I knew that you were well and comfortably off as far as money is concerned, that thought would keep me easy in spite of bad health and troubles. Money? why, it is life! Money does everything. That great dolt of an Alsatian shall sing to another tune! Look here, Delphine, don't give way, don't make a concession of half a quarter of a farthing to that fathead, who has ground you down and made you miserable. If he can't do without you, we will give him a good cudgelling, and keep him in order. Great heavens! my brain is on fire; it is as if there were something red-hot inside my head. My Delphine lying on straw! You! my Fifine! Good gracious! Where are my gloves? Come, let us go at once; I mean to see everything with my own eyes—books, cash, and correspondence, the whole business. I shall have no peace until I know for certain that your fortune is secure."

"Oh! father dear, be careful how you set about it! If there is the least hint of vengeance in the business, if you show yourself openly hostile, it will be all over with me. He knows whom he has to deal with; he thinks it quite natural that if you put the idea into my head, I should be uneasy about my money; but I swear to you that he has it in his own hands, and that he had meant to keep it. He is just the man to abscond with all the money and leave us in the lurch, the scoundrel! He knows quite well that I will not dishonor the name I bear by bringing him into a court of law. His position is strong and weak at the same time. If we drive him to despair, I am lost."

"Why, then, the man is a rogue?"

"Well, yes, father," she said, flinging herself into a chair. "I wanted to keep it from you to spare your feelings," and she burst into tears; "I did not want you to know that you had married me to such a man as he is. He is just the same in private life—body and soul and conscience—the same through and through—hideous! I hate him; I despise him! Yes, after all that that despicable Nucingen has told me, I cannot respect him any longer. A man capable of mixing himself up in such affairs, and of talking about them to me as he did, without the slightest scruple—it is because I have read him through and through that I am afraid of him. He, my husband, frankly proposed to give me my liberty, and do you know what that means? It means that, if things turn out badly for him, I am to play into his hands, and be his stalking-horse."

"But there is law to be had! There is a Place de Grève for sons-in-law of that sort," cried her father; "why, I would guillotine him myself if there was no headsman to do it."

"No, father, the law cannot touch him. Listen, this is what he says, stripped of all his circumlocutions—'Take your choice, you and no one else can be my accomplice; either everything is lost, you are ruined and have not a farthing, or you will let me carry this business through myself.' Is that plain speaking? He *must* have my as-

sistance. He is assured that his wife will deal fairly by him; he knows that I shall leave his money to him and be content with my own. It is an unholy and dishonest compact, and he holds out threats of ruin to compel me to consent to it. He is buying my conscience, and the price is liberty to be Eugène's wife in all but name. 'I connive at your errors, and you allow me to commit crimes and ruin poor families!' Is that sufficiently explicit? Do you know what he means by speculations? He buys up land in his own name, then he finds men of straw to run up houses upon it. These men make a bargain with a contractor to build the houses, paying them by bills at long dates; then in consideration of a small sum they leave my husband in possession of the houses, and finally slip through the fingers of the deluded contractors by going into bankruptcy. The name of the firm of Nucingen has been used to dazzle the poor contractors. I saw that. I noticed, too, that Nucingen had sent bills for large amounts to Amsterdam, London, Naples, and Vienna, in order to prove if necessary that large sums had been paid away by the firm. How could we get possession of those bills?"

Eugène heard a dull thud on the floor; old Goriot must have fallen on his knees.

"Great heavens! what have I done to you? Bound my daughter to this scoundrel who does as he likes with her!—Oh! my child, my child! forgive me!" cried the old man.

"Yes, if I am in the depths of despair, perhaps you are to blame," said Delphine. "We have so little sense when we marry! What do we know of the world, of business, or men, or life? Our fathers should think for us! Father dear, I am not blaming you in the least, forgive me for what I said. This is all my own fault. Nay, do not cry, papa," she said, kissing him.

"Do not you cry either, my little Delphine. Look up and let me kiss away the tears. There! I shall find my wits and unravel this skein of your husband's winding."

"No, let me do that; I shall be able to manage him.

He is fond of me, well and good; I shall use my influence to make him invest my money as soon as possible in landed property in my own name. Very likely I could get him to buy back Nucingen in Alsace in my name; that has always been a pet idea of his. Still, come to-morrow and go through the books, and look into the business. M. Derville knows little of mercantile matters. No, not to-morrow though. I do not want to be upset. Mme. de Beauséant's ball will be the day after to-morrow, and I must keep quiet, so as to look my best and freshest, and do honor to my dear Eugène! . . . Come, let us see his room."

But as she spoke a carriage stopped in the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève, and the sound of Mme. de Restaud's voice came from the staircase. "Is my father in?" she asked of Sylvie.

This accident was luckily timed for Eugène, whose one idea had been to throw himself down on the bed and pretend to be asleep.

"Oh, father, have you heard about Anastasie?" said Delphine, when she heard her sister speak. "It looks as though some strange things had happened in that family."

"What sort of things?" asked Goriot. "This is like to be the death of me. My poor head will not stand a double misfortune."

"Good-morning, father," said the Countess from the threshold. "Oh! Delphine, are you here?"

Mme. de Restaud seemed taken aback by her sister's presence.

"Good-morning, Nasie," said the Baroness. "What is there so extraordinary in my being here? I see our father every day."

"Since when?"

"If you came yourself you would know."

"Don't tease, Delphine," said the Countess fretfully. "I am very miserable, I am lost. Oh! my poor father, it is hopeless this time!"

"What is it, Nasie?" cried Goriot. "Tell us all about

it, child! How white she is! Quick, do something, Delphine; be kind to her, and I will love you even better, if that were possible."

"Poor Nasie!" said Mme. de Nucingen, drawing her sister to a chair. "We are the only two people in the world whose love is always sufficient to forgive you everything. Family affection is the surest, you see."

The Countess inhaled the salts and revived.

"This will kill me!" said their father. "There," he went on, stirring the smouldering fire, "come nearer, both of you. It is cold. What is it, Nasie? Be quick and tell me, this is enough to—"

"Well, then, my husband knows everything," said the Countess. "Just imagine it; do you remember, father, that bill of Maxime's some time ago? Well, that was not the first. I had paid ever so many before that. About the beginning of January M. de Trailles seemed very much troubled. He said nothing to me; but it is so easy to read the hearts of those you love, a mere trifle is enough; and then you feel things instinctively. Indeed, he was more tender and affectionate than ever, and I was happier than I had ever been before. Poor Maxime! in himself he was really saying good-by to me, so he has told me since; he meant to blow his brains out! At last I worried him so, and begged and implored so hard; for two hours I knelt at his knees and prayed and entreated, and at last he told me—that he owed a hundred thousand francs. Oh! papa! a hundred thousand francs! I was beside myself! You had not the money, I knew; I had eaten up all that you had—"

"No," said Goriot; "I could not have got it for you unless I had stolen it. But I would have done that for you, Nasie! I will do it yet."

The words came from him like a sob, a hoarse sound like the death rattle of a dying man; it seemed indeed like the agony of death when the father's love was powerless. There was a pause, and neither of the sisters spoke. It must have been selfishness indeed that could hear unmoved that cry of

anguish that, like a pebble thrown over a precipice, revealed the depths of his despair.

"I found the money, father, by selling what was not mine to sell," and the Countess burst into tears.

Delphine was touched; she laid her head on her sister's shoulder, and cried too.

"Then it is all true," she said.

Anastasie bowed her head, Mme. de Nucingen flung her arms about her, kissed her tenderly, and held her sister to her heart.

"I shall always love you and never judge you, Nasie," she said.

"My angels!" murmured Goriot faintly. "Oh, why should it be trouble that draws you together?"

This warm and palpitating affection seemed to give the Countess courage.

"To save Maxime's life," she said, "to save all my own happiness, I went to the money-lender you know of, a man of iron forged in hell-fire; nothing can melt him; I took all the family diamonds that M. de Restaud is so proud of—his and mine too—and sold them to that M. Gobseck. *Sold them!* Do you understand? I saved Maxime, but I am lost. Restaud found it all out."

"How? Who told him? I will kill him," cried Goriot.

"Yesterday he sent to tell me to come to his room. I went. . . . 'Anastasie,' he said in a voice—oh! such a voice; that was enough, it told me everything—'where are your diamonds?'—'In my room—'—'No,' he said, looking straight at me, 'there they are on that chest of drawers—' and he lifted his handkerchief and showed me the casket. 'Do you know where they come from?' he said. I fell at his feet. . . . I cried; I besought him to tell me the death he wished to see me die."

"You said that!" cried Goriot. "By God in heaven, whoever lays a hand on either of you so long as I am alive may reckon on being roasted by slow fires! Yes, I will cut him in pieces like meat."

Goriot stopped; the words died away in his throat.

"And then, dear, he asked something worse than death of me. Oh! heaven preserve all other women from hearing such words as I heard then!"

"I will murder that man," said Goriot quietly. "But he has only one life, and he deserves to die twice.—And then, what next?" he added, looking at Anastasie.

"Then," the Countess resumed, "there was a pause, and he looked at me. 'Anastasie,' he said, 'I will bury this in silence; there shall be no separation; there are the children. I will not kill M. de Trailles. I might miss him if we fought, and as for other ways of getting rid of him, I should come into collision with the law. If I killed him in your arms, it would bring dishonor on *those* children. But if you do not want to see your children perish, nor their father nor me, you must first of all submit to two conditions. Answer me. Have I a child of my own?' I answered, 'Yes.'—'Which?'—'Ernest, our eldest boy.'—'Very well,' he said, 'and now swear to obey me in this particular from this time forward.' I swore. 'You will make over your property to me when I require you to do so.'"

"Do nothing of the kind!" cried Goriot. "Aha! M. de Restaud, you could not make your wife happy; she has looked for happiness and found it elsewhere, and you make her suffer for your own ineptitude? He will have to reckon with me. Make yourself easy, Nasie. Aha! he cares about his heir! Good, very good. I will get hold of the boy; isn't he my grandson? What the blazes! I can surely go to see the brat! I will stow him away somewhere; I will take care of him, you may be quite easy. I will bring Restaud to terms, the monster! I shall say to him, 'A word or two with you! If you want your son back again, give my daughter her property, and leave her to do as she pleases.'"

"Father!"

"Yes. I am your father, Nasie, a father indeed! That rogue of a great lord had better not ill-treat my daughter. *Tonnerre!* What is it in my veins? There is the blood of

a tiger in me; I could tear those two men to pieces! Oh! children, children! so this is what your lives are! Why, it is death! . . . What will become of you when I shall be here no longer? Fathers ought to live as long as their children. Ah! Lord God in heaven! how ill Thy world is ordered! Thou hast a Son, if what they tell us is true, and yet Thou leavest us to suffer so through our children. My darlings, my darlings! to think that trouble only should bring you to me, that I should only see you with tears on your faces! Ah! yes, you love me, I see that you love me. Come to me and pour out your griefs to me; my heart is large enough to hold them all. Oh! you might rend my heart in pieces, and every fragment would make a father's heart. If only I could bear all your sorrows for you! . . . Ah! you were so happy when you were little and still with me. . . ."

"We have never been happy since," said Delphine. "Where are the old days when we slid down the sacks in the great granary?"

"That is not all, father," said Anastasie in Goriot's ear. The old man gave a startled shudder. "The diamonds only sold for a hundred thousand francs. Maxime is hard pressed. There are twelve thousand francs still to pay. He has given me his word that he will be steady and give up play in future. His love is all that I have left in the world. I have paid such a fearful price for it that I shall die if I lose him now. I have sacrificed my fortune, my honor, my peace of mind, and my children for him. Oh! do something, so that at the least Maxime may be at large and live undisgraced in the world, where he will assuredly make a career for himself. Something more than my happiness is at stake; the children have nothing, and if he is sent to Sainte-Pélagie all his prospects will be ruined."

"I haven't the money, Nasie. I have *nothing*—nothing left. This is the end of everything. Yes, the world is crumbling into ruin, I am sure. Fly! Save yourselves! Ah!—I have still my silver buckles left, and half a dozen silver spoons and forks, the first I ever had in my life. But I

have nothing else except my life annuity, twelve hundred francs . . .”

“Then what has become of your money in the funds?”

“I sold out, and only kept a trifle for my wants. I wanted twelve thousand francs to furnish some rooms for Delphine.”

“In your own house?” asked Mme. de Restaud, looking at her sister.

“What does it matter where they were?” asked Goriot.

“The money is spent now.”

“I see how it is,” said the Countess. “Rooms for M. de Rastignac. Poor Delphine, take warning by me!”

“M. de Rastignac is incapable of ruining the woman he loves, dear.”

“Thanks! Delphine. I thought you would have been kinder to me in my troubles, but you never did love me.”

“Yes, yes, she loves you, Nasie!” cried Goriot; “she was saying so only just now. We were talking about you, and she insisted that you were beautiful, and that she herself was only pretty!”

“Pretty!” said the Countess. “She is as hard as a marble statue.”

“And if I am?” cried Delphine, flushing up, “how have you treated me? You would not recognize me; you closed the doors of every house against me; you have never let an opportunity of mortifying me slip by. And when did I come, as you were always doing, to drain our poor father, a thousand francs at a time, till he is left as you see him now? That is all your doing, sister! I myself have seen my father as often as I could. I have not turned him out of the house, and then come and fawned upon him when I wanted money. I did not so much as know that he had spent those twelve thousand francs on me. I am economical, as you know; and when papa has made me presents, it has never been because I came and begged for them.”

“You were better off than I. M. de Marsay was rich, as you have reason to know. You always were as slippery as gold. Good-by; I have neither sister nor—”

"Oh! hush, hush! Nasie!" cried her father.

"Nobody else would repeat what everybody has ceased to believe. You are an unnatural sister!" cried Delphine.

"Oh, children, children! hush! hush! or I will kill myself before your eyes."

"There, Nasie, I forgive you," said Mme. de Nucingen; "you are very unhappy. But I am kinder than you are. How could you say *that* just when I was ready to do anything in the world to help you, even to be reconciled with my husband, which for my own sake I— Oh! it is just like you; you have behaved cruelly to me all through these nine years."

"Children, children, kiss each other!" cried the father. "You are angels, both of you."

"No. Let me alone," cried the Countess, shaking off the hand that her father had laid on her arm. "She is more merciless than my husband. Any one might think she was a model of all the virtues herself!"

"I would rather have people think that I owed money to M. de Marsay than own that M. de Trailles had cost me more than two hundred thousand francs," retorted Mme. de Nucingen.

"*Delphine!*" cried the Countess, stepping toward her sister.

"I shall tell you the truth about yourself if you begin to slander me," said the Baroness coldly.

"Delphine! you are a—"

Old Goriot sprang between them, grasped the Countess's hand, and laid his own over her mouth.

"Good heavens, father! What have you been handling this morning?" said Anastasie.

"Ah! well, yes, I ought not to have touched you," said the poor father, wiping his hands on his trousers, "but I have been packing up my things; I did not know that you were coming to see me."

He was glad that he had drawn down her wrath upon himself.

"Ah!" he sighed, as he sat down, "you children have broken my heart between you. This is killing me. My head feels as if it were on fire. Be good to each other and love each other! This will be the death of me! Delphine! Nasie! come, be sensible; you are both in the wrong. Come, Dedel," he added, looking through his tears at the Baroness, "she must have twelve thousand francs, you see; let us see if we can find them for her. Oh, my girls, do not look at each other like that!" and he sank on his knees beside Delphine. "Ask her to forgive you—just to please me," he said in her ear. "She is more miserable than you are. Come now, Dedel."

"Poor Nasie!" said Delphine, alarmed at her father's wild extravagant grief, "I was in the wrong, kiss me—"

"Ah! that is like balm to my heart," cried Father Goriot. "But how are we to find twelve thousand francs? I might offer myself as a substitute in the army—"

"Oh! father dear!" they both cried, flinging their arms about him. "No, no!"

"God reward you for the thought. We are not worth it, are we, Nasie?" asked Delphine.

"And besides, father dear, it would only be a drop in the bucket," observed the Countess.

"But is flesh and blood worth nothing?" cried the old man in his despair. "I would give body and soul to save you, Nasie. I would do a murder for the man who would rescue you. I would do, as Vautrin did, go to the hulks, go—" he stopped as if struck by a thunderbolt, and put both hands to his head. "Nothing left!" he cried, tearing his hair. "If I only knew of a way to steal money, but it is so hard to do it, and then you can't set to work by yourself, and it takes time to rob a bank. Yes, it is time I was dead; there is nothing left me to do but to die. I am no good in the world; I am no longer a father! No. She has come to me in her extremity, and, wretch that I am, I have nothing to give her. Ah! you put your money into a life annuity, old scoundrel; and had you not daughters? You did not

love them. Die, die in a ditch, like the dog that you are! Yes, I am worse than a dog; a beast would not have done as I have! Oh! my head . . . it throbs as if it would burst."

"Papa!" cried both the young women at once, "do, pray, be reasonable!" and they clung to him, sobbing, to prevent him from dashing his head against the wall.

Eugène, greatly alarmed, took the bill that bore Vautrin's signature, saw that the stamp would suffice for a larger sum, altered the figures, made it into a regular bill for twelve thousand francs, payable to Goriot's order, and went to his neighbor's room.

"Here is the money, madame," he said, handing the piece of paper to her. "I was asleep; your conversation awoke me, and by this means I learned all that I owed to M. Goriot. This bill can be discounted, and I shall meet it punctually."

The Countess stood motionless and speechless, but she held the bill in her fingers.

"Delphine," she said, with a white face, and her whole frame quivering with indignation, anger, and rage, "I forgave you everything; God is my witness that I forgave you, but I cannot forgive this! So this gentleman was there all the time, and you knew it! Your petty spite has led you to wreak your vengeance on me by betraying my secrets, my life, my children's lives, my shame, my honor! There, you are nothing to me any longer. I hate you. I will do all that I can to injure you. I will . . ." Anger paralyzed her; the words died in her dry parched throat.

"Why, he is my son, my child; he is your brother, your preserver!" cried Goriot. "Kiss his hand, Nasie! Stay, I will embrace him myself," he said, straining Eugène to his breast in a frenzied clasp. "Oh, my boy! I will be more than a father to you; I would be everything in the world to you; if I had God's power, I would fling worlds at your feet. Why don't you kiss him, Nasie? He is not a man, but an angel, an angel out of heaven."

"Never mind her, father; she is mad just now."

"Mad! am I? And what are you?" cried Anastasie.

"Children, children, I shall die if you go on like this," cried the old man, and he staggered and fell on the bed as if a bullet had struck him.—"They are killing me between them," he said to himself.

The Countess fixed her eyes on Eugène, who stood stock-still; all his faculties were numbed by this violent scene.

"Sir? . . ." she said, doubt and inquiry in her face, tone and bearing; she took no notice now of her father nor of Delphine, who was hastily unfastening his waistcoat.

"Madame," said Eugène, answering the question before it was asked, "I will meet the bill, and keep silence about it."

"You have killed father, Nasie!" said Delphine, pointing to Goriot, who lay unconscious. The Countess fled.

"I freely forgive her," said the old man, opening his eyes; "her position is horrible; it would turn an older head than hers. Comfort Nasie, and be nice to her, Delphine; promise it to your poor father before he dies," he asked, holding Delphine's hand in a convulsive clasp.

"Oh! what ails you, father?" she cried in real alarm.

"Nothing, nothing," said Goriot; "it will go off. There is something heavy pressing on my forehead, a little headache. . . . Ah! poor Nasie, what a life lies before her!"

Just as he spoke, the Countess came back again and flung herself on her knees before him. "Forgive me!" she cried.

"Come," said her father, "you are hurting me still more."

"Monsieur," the Countess said, turning to Rastignac, "misery made me unjust to you. You will be a brother to me, will you not?" and she held out her hand. Her eyes were full of tears as she spoke.

"Nasie," cried Delphine, flinging her arms round her sister, "my little Nasie, let us forget and forgive."

"No, no," cried Nasie; "I shall never forget!"

"Dear angels," cried Goriot, "it is as if a dark curtain over my eyes had been raised; your voices have called me back to life. Kiss each other once more. Well, now, Nasie, that bill will save you, won't it?"

"I hope so. Papa, will you write your name on it?"

"There! how stupid of me to forget that! But I am not feeling at all well, Nasie, so you must not remember it against me. Send and let me know as soon as you are out of your strait. No, I will go to you. No, after all, I will not go; I might meet your husband, and I should kill him on the spot. And as for signing away your property, I shall have a word to say about that. Quick, my child, and keep Maxime in order in future."

Eugène was too bewildered to speak.

"Poor Anastasie, she always had a violent temper," said Mme. de Nucingen, "but she has a good heart."

"She came back for the indorsement," said Eugène in Delphine's ear.

"Do you think so?"

"I only wish I could think otherwise. Do not trust her," he answered, raising his eyes as if he confided to heaven the thoughts that he did not venture to express.

"Yes. She is always acting a part to some extent."

"How do you feel now, dear Father Goriot?" asked Rastignac.

"I should like to go to sleep," he replied.

Eugène helped him to bed, and Delphine sat by the bedside, holding his hand until he fell asleep. Then she went.

"This evening at the Italiens," she said to Eugène, "and you can let me know how he is. To-morrow you will leave this place, monsieur. Let us go into your room.—Oh! how frightful!" she cried on the threshold. "Why, you are even worse lodged than our father. Eugène, you have behaved well. I would love you more if that were possible; but, dear boy, if you are to succeed in life, you must not begin by flinging twelve thousand francs out of the windows like that. The Comte de Trailles is a confirmed gambler. My sister shuts her eyes to it. He would have made the twelve thousand francs in the same way that he wins and loses heaps of gold."

A groan from the next room brought them back to Goriot's bedside; to all appearance he was asleep, but the

two lovers caught the words, "They are not happy!" Whether he was awake or sleeping, the tone in which they were spoken went to his daughter's heart. She stole up to the pallet-bed on which her father lay, and kissed his forehead. He opened his eyes.

"Ah! Delphine!" he said.

"How are you now?" she asked.

"Quite comfortable. Do not worry about me; I shall get up presently. Don't stay with me; go and be happy."

Eugène went back with Delphine as far as her door; but he was not easy about Goriot, and would not stay to dinner, as she proposed. He wanted to be back at the Maison Vauquer. Old Goriot had left his room, and was just sitting down to dinner as he came in. Bianchon had placed himself where he could watch the old man carefully; and when the old vermicelli maker took up his square of bread and smelled it to find out the quality of the flour, the medical student, studying him closely, saw that the action was purely mechanical, and shook his head.

"Just come and sit over here, hospitaller of Cochin," said Eugène.

Bianchon went the more willingly because his change of place brought him next to the old lodger.

"What is wrong with him?" asked Rastignac.

"It is all up with him, or I am much mistaken! Something very extraordinary must have taken place; he looks to me as if he were in imminent danger of serous apoplexy. The lower part of his face is composed enough, but the upper part is drawn and distorted. Then there is that peculiar look about the eyes that indicates an effusion of serum in the brain; they look as though they were covered with a film of fine dust, do you notice? I shall know more about it by to-morrow morning."

"Is there any cure for it?"

"None. It might be possible to stave death off for a time if a way could be found of setting up a reaction in the lower extremities; but if the symptoms do not abate by to-morrow

evening, it will be all over with him, poor old fellow! Do you know what has happened to bring this on? There must have been some violent shock, and his mind has given way."

"Yes, there was," said Rastignac, remembering how the daughters had struck blow on blow at their father's heart.

"But Delphine loves her father," he said to himself.

That evening at the opera Rastignac chose his words carefully, lest he should give Mme. de Nucingen needless alarm.

"Do not be anxious about him," she said, however, as soon as Eugène began, "our father has really a strong constitution, but this morning we gave him a shock. Our whole fortunes were in peril, so the thing was serious, you see. I could not live if your affection did not make me insensible to troubles that I should once have thought too hard to bear. At this moment I have but one fear left, but one misery to dread—to lose the love that has made me feel so glad to live. Everything else is as nothing to me compared with your love; I care for nothing else, for you are all the world to me. If I feel glad to be rich, it is for your sake. To my shame be it said, I think of my lover before my father. Do you ask why? I cannot tell you, but all my life is in you. My father gave me a heart, but you have taught it to beat. The whole world may condemn me; what does it matter if I stand acquitted in your eyes, for you have no right to think ill of me for the faults which a tyrannous love has forced me to commit for you! Do you think me an unnatural daughter? Oh! no, no one could help loving such a dear kind father as ours. But how could I hide the inevitable consequences of our miserable marriages from him? Why did he allow us to marry when we did? Was it not his duty to think for us and foresee for us? To-day I know he suffers as much as we do, but how can it be helped? And as for comforting him, we could not comfort him in the least. Our resignation would give him more pain and hurt him far more than complaints and upbraidings. There are times in life when everything turns to bitterness." Eugène was silent, the artless and sincere outpouring made an impression on him.

Parisian women are often false, intoxicated with vanity, selfish and self-absorbed, frivolous and shallow; yet of all women, when they love, they sacrifice their personal feelings to their passion; they rise but so much the higher for all the pettiness overcome in their nature, and become sublime. Then Eugène was struck by the profound discernment and insight displayed by this woman in judging of natural affection. Mme. de Nucingen was piqued by the silence.

"What are you thinking about?" she asked.

"I am thinking about what you said just now. Hitherto I have always felt sure that I cared far more for you than you did for me."

She smiled, and would not give way to the happiness she felt, lest their talk should exceed the conventional limits of propriety. She had never heard the vibrating tones of a sincere and youthful love; she feared for her self-control.

"Eugène," she said, changing the conversation, "I wonder whether you know what has been happening? All Paris will go to Mme. de Beauséant's to-morrow. The Rochefides and the Marquis d'Ajuda have agreed to keep the matter a profound secret, but to-morrow the king will sign the marriage-contract, and your poor cousin the Vicomtesse knows nothing of it as yet. She cannot put off her ball, and the Marquis will not be there. People are wondering what will happen?"

"The world laughs at baseness and connives at it. But this will kill Mme. de Beauséant."

"Oh, no," said Delphine, smiling, "you do not know that kind of woman. Why, all Paris will be there, and so shall I; I ought to go there for your sake."

"Perhaps, after all, it is one of those absurd reports that people set in circulation here."

"We shall know the truth to-morrow."

Eugène did not return to the Maison Vauquer. He could not forego the pleasure of occupying his new rooms in the Rue d'Artois. Yesterday evening he had been obliged to leave Delphine soon after midnight, but that night it was Delphine

who stayed with him until two o'clock in the morning. He rose late, and waited for Mme. de Nucingen, who came about noon to breakfast with him. Youth snatches eagerly at these rosy moments of happiness, and Eugène had almost forgotten Goriot's existence. The pretty things that surrounded him were growing familiar; this domestication in itself was one long festival for him, and Mme. de Nucingen was there to glorify it all by her presence. It was four o'clock before they thought of Goriot, and of how he had looked forward to the new life in that house. Eugène said that the old man ought to be moved at once, lest he should grow too ill to move. He left Delphine, and hurried to the lodging-house.

"Aha!" said the painter as Eugène came in, "Father Goriot has broken down at last. Bianchon is upstairs with him. One of his daughters—the Comtesse de Restaurama—came to see the old gentleman, and he would get up and go out, and made himself worse. Society is about to lose one of its brightest ornaments."

Rastignac sprang to the staircase. "Monsieur Eugène, the mistress is calling you," shouted Sylvie.

"It is this, sir," said the widow. "You and M. Goriot should by rights have moved out on the 15th of February. That was three days ago; to-day is the 18th, I ought really to be paid a month in advance; but if you will engage to pay for both, I shall be quite satisfied."

"Why can't you trust him?"

"Trust him, indeed! If the old gentleman went off his head and died, those daughters of his would not pay me a farthing, and his things won't fetch ten francs. This morning he went out with all the spoons and forks he has left, I don't know why. He had got himself up to look quite young, and—Lord, forgive me—but I thought he had rouge on his cheeks; he looked quite young again."

"I will be responsible," said Eugène, shuddering with horror, for he foresaw the end. He climbed the stairs and reached old Goriot's room. The old man was tossing on his bed. Bianchon was with him.

"Good-evening, father," said Eugène.

The old man turned his glassy eyes on him, smiled gently, and said: "How is *she*?"

"She is quite well. But how are you?"

"There is nothing much the matter."

"Don't tire him," said Bianchon, drawing Eugène into a corner of the room.

"Well?" asked Rastignac.

"Nothing but a miracle can save him now. Serious congestion has set in; I have put on mustard plasters, and luckily he can feel them, they are acting."

"Is it possible to move him?"

"Quite out of the question. He must stay where he is, and be kept as quiet as possible—"

"Dear Bianchon," said Eugène, "we will nurse him."

"I have had the head physician round from my hospital to see him."

"And what did he say?"

"He will give no opinion till to-morrow evening. He promised to look in again at the end of the day. Unluckily, the preposterous creature must needs go and do something foolish this morning; he will not say what it was. He is as obstinate as a mule. As soon as I begin to talk to him he pretends not to hear, and lies as if he were asleep instead of answering, or if he opens his eyes he begins to groan. Some time this morning he went out on foot in the streets, nobody knows where he went, and he took everything that he had of any value with him. He has been driving some confounded bargain, and it has been too much for his strength. One of his daughters has been here."

"Was it the Countess?" asked Eugène. "A tall, dark-haired woman, with large bright eyes and slender figure?"

"Yes."

"Leave him to me for a bit," said Rastignac. "I will make him confess; he will tell me all about it."

"And meanwhile I will get my dinner. But try not to excite him; there is still some hope left."

"All right."

"How they will enjoy themselves to-morrow," said Goriot when they were alone. "They are going to a grand ball."

"What were you doing this morning, papa, to make yourself so poorly this evening that you have to stop in bed?"

"Nothing."

"Did not Anastasie come to see you?"

"Yes," said old Goriot.

"Well, then, don't keep anything from me. What more did she want of you?"

"Oh, she was very miserable," he answered, gathering up all his strength to speak. "It was this way, my boy. Since that affair of the diamonds, Nasie has not had a penny of her own. For this ball she had ordered a golden gown like a setting for a jewel. Her mantua maker, a woman without a conscience, would not give her credit, so Nasie's waiting-woman advanced a thousand francs on account. Poor Nasie! reduced to such shifts! It cut me to the heart to think of it! But when Nasie's maid saw how things were between her master and mistress, she was afraid of losing her money, and came to an understanding with the dressmaker, and the woman refuses to send the ball-dress until the money is paid. The gown is ready, and the ball is to-morrow night; Nasie was in despair. She wanted to borrow my forks and spoons to pawn them. Her husband is determined that she shall go and wear the diamonds, so as to contradict the stories that are told all over Paris. How can she go to that heartless scoundrel and say, 'I owe a thousand francs to my dressmaker; pay her for me?' She cannot. I saw that myself. Delphine will be there too in a superb toilet, and Anastasie ought not to be outshone by her younger sister. And then—she was drowned in tears, poor girl! I felt so humbled yesterday when I had not the twelve thousand francs, that I would have given the rest of my miserable life to wipe out that wrong. You see, I could have borne anything once, but latterly this want of money has broken my heart. Oh! I did not do it by halves; I titivated myself up a bit, and

went out and sold my spoons and forks and buckles for six hundred francs; then I went to old Daddy Gobseck, and sold a year's interest in my annuity for four hundred francs down. Pshaw! I can live on dry bread, as I did when I was a young man; if I have done it before, I can do it again. My Nasie shall have one happy evening, at any rate. She shall be smart. The banknote for a thousand francs is here under my pillow; it warms me to have it lying there under my head, for it is going to make my poor Nasie happy. She can turn that bad girl Victoire out of the house. A servant that cannot trust her mistress, did any one ever hear the like! I shall be quite well to-morrow. Nasie is coming at ten o'clock. They must not think that I am ill, or they will not go to the ball; they will stop and take care of me. To-morrow Nasie will come and hold me in her arms as if I were one of her children; her kisses will make me well again. After all, I might have spent the thousand francs on physic; I would far rather give them to my little Nasie, who can charm all the pain away. At any rate, I am some comfort to her in her misery; and that makes up for my unkindness in buying an annuity. She is in the depths, and I cannot draw her out of them now. Oh! I will go into business again, I will buy wheat in Odessa; out there, wheat fetches a quarter of the price it sells for here. There is a law against the importation of grain, but the good folk who made the law forgot to prohibit the introduction of wheat products and food stuffs made from corn. Hey! hey! . . . That struck me this morning. There is a fine trade to be done in starch."

Eugène thought that his friend was light-headed. "Come," he said, "do not talk any more, you must rest—"

Bianchon then came up, and Eugène went down to dinner.

The two students sat up with him that night, relieving each other in turn. Next morning Bianchon thought the symptoms more hopeful, but the patient's condition demanded continual attention, which the two students alone were willing to give. Leeches must be applied to the wasted body, the poultices and hot foot-baths and other

details of the treatment required the physical strength and devotion of the two young men. Mme. de Restaud did not come; but she sent a messenger for the money.

"I expected she would come herself; but it would have been a pity for her to come, she would have been anxious about me," said the father, and to all appearance he was well content.

At seven o'clock that evening Thérèse came with a letter from Delphine.

"What are you doing, dear friend? I have been loved for a very little while, and am I neglected already? In the confidences of heart and heart, I have learned to know your soul—you are too noble not to be faithful forever, for you know that love with all its infinite subtle changes of feeling is never the same. Once you said, as we were listening to the Prayer in 'Mosè in Egitto,' 'For some it is the monotony of a single note; for others, it is the infinite of sound.' Remember that I am expecting you this evening to take me to Mme. de Beauséant's ball. Every one knows now that the King signed M. d'Ajuda's marriage-contract this morning, and the poor Vicomtesse knew nothing of it until two o'clock this afternoon. All Paris will flock to her house, of course, just as a crowd fills the Place de Grève to see an execution. It is horrible, is it not, to go out of curiosity to see if she will hide her anguish, and whether she will die courageously? I certainly should not go, my friend, if I had been at her house before; but, of course, she will not receive society any more after this, and all my efforts would be in vain. My position is a very unusual one, and besides, I am going there partly on your account. I am waiting for you. If you are not beside me in less than two hours, I do not know whether I could forgive such treason."

Rastignac took up a pen and wrote:

"I am waiting till the doctor comes to know if there is any hope of your father's life. He is lying dangerously ill. I will come and bring you the news, but I am afraid it may be a sentence of death. When I come you can decide whether you can go to the ball.—Yours a thousand times."

At half-past eight the doctor arrived. He did not take a very hopeful view of the case, but thought that there was

no immediate danger. Improvements and relapses might be expected, and the good man's life and reason hung in the balance. "It would be better for him to die at once," the doctor said as he took leave.

Eugène left Goriot to Bianchon's care, and went to carry the sad news to Mme. de Nucingen. Family feeling lingered in her, and this must put an end to her plans of amusement.

"Tell her to enjoy her evening as if nothing had happened," cried Goriot. He had been lying in a sort of stupor, but he suddenly sat upright as Eugène went out.

Eugène, half heartbroken, entered Delphine's room. Her hair had been dressed; she wore her dancing slippers; she had only to put on her ball-dress; but when the artist is giving the finishing stroke to his creation, the last touches require more time than the whole groundwork.

"Why! you are not dressed!" she cried.

"Madame, your father—"

"My father again!" she exclaimed, breaking in upon him. "You need not teach me what is due to my father, I have known my father this long while. Not a word, Eugène. I will hear what you have to say when you are dressed. My carriage is waiting, take it, go round to your rooms and dress; Thérèse has put out everything in readiness for you. Come back as soon as you can; we will talk about my father on the way to Mme. de Beauséant's. We must go early; if we have to wait our turn in a row of carriages, we shall be lucky if we get there by eleven o'clock."

"Madame—"

"Quick! not a word!" she cried, darting into her dressing-room for a necklace.

"Do go, Monsieur Eugène, or you will vex Madame," said Thérèse, hurrying him away; and Eugène was too horror-stricken by this elegant parricide to resist.

He went to his rooms and dressed, sad, thoughtful, and dispirited. The world of Paris was like an ocean of mud for him just then. "Their crimes are paltry," said Eugène to himself. "Vautrin was greater."

He had seen society in its three great phases—Obedience, Struggle, and Revolt; the Family, the World, and Vautrin; and he hesitated in his choice. Obedience was dull, Revolt impossible, Struggle hazardous. His thoughts wandered back to the home circle. He thought of the quiet uneventful life, the pure happiness of the days spent among those who loved him there. Those loving and beloved beings passed their lives in obedience to the natural laws of the hearth, and in that obedience found a deep and constant serenity, unvexed by torments such as these. Yet, for all his good impulses, he could not bring himself to make profession of the religion of pure souls to Delphine, nor to prescribe the duties of piety to her in the name of love. His education had begun to bear its fruits; he loved selfishly already. Besides, his tact had discovered to him the real nature of Delphine; he divined instinctively that she was capable of stepping over her father's corpse to go to the ball; and within himself he felt that he had neither the strength of mind to play the part of mentor, nor the strength of character to vex her, nor the courage to leave her to go alone.

"She would never forgive me for putting her in the wrong over it," he said to himself. Then he turned the doctor's dictum over in his mind; he tried to believe that Goriot was not so dangerously ill as he had imagined, and ended by collecting together a sufficient quantity of traitorous excuses for Delphine's conduct. She did not know how ill her father was; the kind old man himself would have made her go to the ball if she had gone to see him.

Eugène did not wish to see too clearly; he was ready to sacrifice his conscience to his mistress. Within the last few days his whole life had undergone a change. Woman had entered into his world and thrown it into chaos, family claims dwindled away before her; she had appropriated all his being to her uses. Rastignac and Delphine found each other at a crisis in their lives when their union gave them the most poignant bliss. Their passion, so long proved, had only gained in strength by the gratified desire that

often extinguishes passion. This woman was his, and Eugène recognized that not until then had he loved her; perhaps love is only gratitude for pleasure. This woman, vile or sublime, he adored for the pleasures she had brought as her dower; and Delphine loved Rastignac as Tantalus would have loved some angel who had satisfied his hunger and quenched the burning thirst in his parched throat.

"Well," said Mme. de Nucingen when he came back in evening dress, "how is my father?"

"Very dangerously ill; if you will grant me a proof of your affection, we will just go in to see him on the way."

"Very well," she said. "Yes, but afterward. Dear Eugène, do be nice, and don't preach to me. Come."

They set out. Eugène said nothing for a while.

"What is it now?" she asked.

"I can hear the death-rattle in your father's throat," he said, almost angrily. And with the hot indignation of youth, he told the story of Mme. de Restaud's vanity and cruelty, of her father's final act of self-sacrifice, that had brought about this struggle between life and death, of the price that had been paid for Anastasie's golden embroideries. Delphine cried.

"I shall look frightful," she thought, drying her tears. "I will nurse my father; I will not leave him," she said aloud.

"Ah! now you are as I would have you," exclaimed Rastignac.

The lamps of five hundred carriages lighted up the darkness about the Hôtel de Beauséant. The great world was flocking thither in its eager curiosity to see the great lady at the moment of her fall, and the rooms on the ground floor were already full to overflowing; when Mme. de Nucingen and Rastignac appeared. Never since Louis XIV. tore her lover away from La grande Mademoiselle, and the whole court hastened to visit that unfortunate princess, had a disastrous love affair made such a sensation in Paris. But the youngest daughter of the almost royal house of Burgundy had risen proudly above her pain, and moved till the last moment like a queen in this world—its vanities had

always been valueless for her, save in so far as they contributed to the triumph of her passion. The salons were filled with the most beautiful women in Paris, resplendent in their toilets, and radiant with smiles. Ministers and ambassadors, men bedizened with decorations, stars, and ribbons, men who bore the most illustrious names in France, had gathered about the Vicomtesse.

The music of the orchestra vibrated in wave after wave of sound from the golden ceiling of the palace, now made desolate for its queen.

Madame de Beauséant stood at the door of the first salon to receive the guests who were styled her friends. She was dressed in white, and wore no ornament in the plaits of hair braided about her head; her face was calm; there was no sign there of pride, nor of pain, nor of joy that she did not feel. No one could read her soul; she stood there like some Niobe carved in marble. For a few intimate friends there was a tinge of satire in her smile; but no scrutiny saw any change in her, nor had she looked otherwise in the days of the glory of her happiness. The most callous of her guests admired her as young Rome applauded some gladiator who could die smiling.

"I was afraid that you would not come," she said to Rastignac.

"Madame," he said, in an unsteady voice, taking her speech as a reproach, "I shall be the last to go, that is why I am here."

"Good," she said, and she took his hand. "You are perhaps the only one that I can trust here among all these. Oh, my friend, when you love, love a woman whom you are sure that you can love always. Never forsake a woman."

She took Rastignac's arm, and went toward a sofa in the card-room.

"I want you to go to the Marquis," she said. "Jacques, my footman, will go with you; he has a letter that you will take. I am asking the Marquis to give my letters back to me. He will give them all up, I like to think that. When

you have my letters, go up to my room with them. Some one shall bring me word."

She rose to go to meet the Duchesse de Langeais, her most intimate friend, who had come like the rest of the world.

Rastignac went. He asked for the Marquis d'Ajuda at the Hotel Rochefide, feeling certain that the latter would be spending his evening there, and so it proved. The Marquis went to his own house with Rastignac, and gave a casket to the student, saying as he did so, "They are all there."

He seemed as if he was about to say something to Eugène, to ask about the ball, or the Vicomtesse; perhaps he was on the brink of the confession that, even then, he was in despair, and knew that his marriage had been a fatal mistake; but a proud gleam shone in his eyes, and with deplorable courage he kept his noblest feelings a secret.

"Do not even mention my name to her, my dear Eugène." He grasped Rastignac's hand sadly and affectionately, and turned away from him. Eugène went back to the Hotel Beauséant, the servant took him to the Vicomtesse's room. There were signs there of preparations for a journey. He sat down by the fire, fixed his eyes on the cedar wood casket, and fell into deep mournful musings.

"Ah! my friend! . . ." said the Vicomtesse; she crossed the room and laid her hand on Rastignac's shoulder. He saw the tears in his cousin's uplifted eyes, saw that one hand was raised to take the casket, and that the fingers of the other trembled. Suddenly she took the casket, put it in the fire, and watched it burn.

"They are dancing," she said. "They all came very early; but death will be long in coming. Hush! my friend," and she laid a finger on Rastignac's lips, seeing that he was about to speak. "I shall never see Paris again. I am taking my leave of this world. At five o'clock this morning I shall set out on my journey; I mean to bury myself in the remotest part of Normandy. I have had very little time to make my arrangements; since three o'clock this afternoon I have been busy sign-

ing documents, setting my affairs in order; there was no one whom I could send to . . .” She broke off.

“He was sure to be . . .”

Again she broke off; the weight of her sorrow was more than she could bear. In such moments as these everything is agony, and some words are impossible to utter.

“And so I counted upon you to do me this last piece of service this evening,” she said. “I should like to give you some pledge of friendship. I shall often think of you. You have seemed to me to be kind and noble, fresh-hearted and true, in this world where such qualities are seldom found. I should like you to think sometimes of me. Stay,” she said, glancing about her, “there is this box that has held my gloves. Every time I opened it before going to a ball or to the theatre, I used to feel that I must be beautiful, because I was so happy; and I never touched it except to lay some gracious memory in it: there is so much of my old self in it, of a Madame de Beauséant who now lives no longer. Will you take it? I will leave directions that it is to be sent to you in the Rue d’Artois.—Mme. de Nucingen looked very charming this evening. Eugène, you must love her. Perhaps we may never see each other again, my friend; but be sure of this, that I shall pray for you who have been kind to me.—Now let us go downstairs. People shall not think that I am weeping. I have all time and eternity before me, and where I am going I shall be alone, no one will ask me the reason of my tears. One last look round.”

She stood for a moment. Then she covered her eyes with her hands for an instant, dashed away the tears, bathed her face with cold water, and took the student’s arm.

“Let us go!” she said.

This suffering, endured with such noble fortitude, shook Eugène with a more violent emotion than he had felt before. They went back to the ballroom, and Mme. de Beauséant went through the rooms on Eugène’s arm—the last delicately gracious act of a gracious woman. In another moment he saw the sisters, Mme. de Restaud and Mme. de

Nucingen. The Countess shone in all the glory of her magnificent diamonds; every stone must have scorched like fire, she was never to wear them again. Strong as love and pride might be in her, she found it difficult to meet her husband's eyes. The sight of her was scarcely calculated to lighten Rastignac's sad thoughts; through the blaze of those diamonds he seemed to see the wretched pallet-bed on which old Goriot was lying. The Vicomtesse misread his melancholy; she withdrew her hand from his arm.

"Come," she said, "I must not deprive you of a pleasure."

Eugène was soon claimed by Delphine. She was delighted with the impression that she had made, and eager to lay at her lover's feet the homage she had received in this new world in which she hoped to live and move henceforth.

"What do you think of Nasie?" she asked him.

"She has discounted everything, even her own father's death," said Rastignac.

Toward four o'clock in the morning the rooms began to empty. A little later the music ceased, and the Duchesse de Langeais and Rastignac were left in the great ballroom. The Vicomtesse, who thought to find the student there alone, came back there at the last. She had taken leave of M. de Beauséant, who had gone off to bed, saying again as he went, "It is a great pity, my dear, to shut yourself up at your age! Pray stay among us."

Mme. de Beauséant saw the Duchess, and, in spite of herself, an exclamation broke from her.

"I saw how it was, Clara," said Mme. de Langeais. "You are going from among us, and you will never come back. But you must not go until you have heard me, until we have understood each other."

She took her friend's arm, and they went together into the next room. There the Duchess looked at her with tears in her eyes; she held her friend in a close embrace.

"I could not let you go without a word, dearest; the remorse would have been too hard to bear. You can count upon me as surely as upon yourself. You have shown your-

self great this evening; I feel that I am worthy of our friendship, and I mean to prove myself worthy of it. I have not always been kind; I was in the wrong; forgive me, dearest; I wish I could unsay anything that may have hurt you; I take back those words. One common sorrow has brought us together again, for I do not know which of us is the more miserable. M. de Montriveau was not here to-night; do you understand what that means?—None of those who saw you to-night, Clara, will ever forget you. I mean to make one last effort. If I fail, I shall go into a convent. Clara, where are you going?"

"Into Normandy, to Courcelles. I shall love and pray there until the day when God shall take me from this world. —M. de Rastignac!" called the Vicomtesse, in a tremulous voice, remembering that the young man was waiting there.

The student knelt to kiss his cousin's hand.

"Good-by, Antoinette!" said Mme. de Beauséant. "May you be happy."—She turned to the student. "You are young," she said; "you have some beliefs still left. I have been privileged, like some dying people, to find sincere and reverent feeling in those about me as I take my leave of this world."

It was nearly five o'clock that morning when Rastignac came away. He had put Mme. de Beauséant into her travelling carriage, and received her last farewells, spoken amid fast-falling tears; for no greatness is so great that it can rise above the laws of human affection, or live beyond the jurisdiction of pain, as certain demagogues would have the people believe. Eugène returned on foot to the Maison Vauquer through the darkness. His education was nearly complete.

"There is no hope for poor old Goriot," said Bianchon, as Rastignac came into the room. Eugène looked for a while at the sleeping man, then he turned to his friend. "Dear fellow, you are content with the modest career you have marked out for yourself; keep to it. I am in hell, and I must stay there. Believe everything that you hear said of the world, nothing is too impossibly bad. No Juvenal

could paint the horrors hidden away under the covering of gems and gold."

At two o'clock in the afternoon Bianchon came to wake Rastignac, and begged him to take charge of Goriot, who had grown worse as the day wore on. The medical student was obliged to go out.

"Poor old man, he has not two days to live, maybe not many hours," he said; "but we must do our utmost, all the same, to fight the disease. It will be a very troublesome case, and we shall want money. We can nurse him between us, of course, but, for my own part, I have not a penny. I have turned out his pockets, and rummaged through his drawers—result, *nix*. I asked him about it while his mind was clear, and he told me he had not a farthing of his own. What have you?"

"I have twenty francs left," said Rastignac; "but I will take them to the roulette table, I shall be sure to win."

"And if you lose?"

"Then I shall go to his sons-in-law and his daughters and ask them for money."

"And suppose they refuse?" Bianchon retorted. "The most pressing thing just now is not really money; we must put mustard poultices, as hot as they can be made, on his feet and legs. If he calls out, there is still some hope for him. You know how to set about doing it, and besides, Christophe will help you. I am going round to the dispensary to persuade them to let us have the things we want on credit. It is a pity that we could not move him to the hospital; poor fellow, he would be better there. Well, I leave you in charge; you must stay with him till I come back."

The two young men went back to the room where the old man was lying. Eugène was startled at the change in Goriot's face, so livid, distorted, and feeble.

"How are you, papa?" he said, bending over the pallet-bed. Goriot turned his dull eyes upon Eugène, looked at him attentively, and did not recognize him. It was more than the student could bear; the tears came into his eyes.

"Bianchon, ought we to have curtains put up in the windows?"

"No, the temperature and the light do not affect him now. It would be a good thing for him if he felt heat or cold; but we must have a fire in any case to make *tisanes* and heat the other things. I will send round a few sticks; they will last till we can have in some firewood. I burned all the bark fuel you had left, as well as his, poor man, yesterday and during the night. The place was so damp that the water stood in drops on the walls; I could hardly get the room dry. Christophe came in and swept the floor, but the place is like a stable; I had to burn juniper, the smell was something horrible."

"Mon Dieu!" said Rastignac. "To think of those daughters of his."

"One moment, if he asks for something to drink, give him this," said the house student, pointing to a large white jar. "If he begins to groan, and the belly feels hot and hard to the touch, you know what to do; get Christophe to help you. If he should happen to grow much excited, and begin to talk a good deal, and even to ramble in his talk, do not be alarmed. It would not be a bad symptom. But send Christophe to the Hospice Cochin. Our doctor, my chum, or I will come and apply moxas. We had a great consultation this morning while you were asleep. A surgeon, a pupil of Gall's, came, and our house surgeon, and the head physician from the Hotel-Dieu. Those gentlemen considered that the symptoms were very unusual and interesting; the case must be carefully watched, for it throws a light on several obscure and rather important scientific problems. One of the authorities says that if there is more pressure of serum on one or other portion of the brain, it should affect his mental capacities in such and such directions. So if he should talk, notice very carefully what kind of ideas his mind seems to run on; whether memory, or penetration, or the reasoning faculties are exercised; whether sentiments or practical questions fill his thoughts; whether he makes

forecasts or dwells on the past; in fact, you must be prepared to give an accurate report of him. It is quite likely that the extravasation fills the whole brain, in which case he will die in the imbecile state in which he is lying now. You cannot tell anything about these mysterious nervous diseases. Suppose the crash came here," said Bianchon, touching the back of the head, "very strange things have been known to happen; the brain sometimes partially recovers, and death is delayed. Or the congested matter may pass out of the brain altogether through channels which can only be determined by a post-mortem examination."

"Did they enjoy themselves?" It was old Goriot who spoke. He had recognized Eugène.

"Oh! he thinks of nothing but his daughters," said Bianchon. "Scores of times last night he said to me, 'They are dancing now! She has her dress.' He called them by their names. He made me cry, the devil take it, calling, with that tone in his voice, for 'Delphine! my little Delphine! and Nasie!' Upon my word," said the medical student, "it was enough to make any one burst out crying."

"Delphine," said the old man, "she is there, isn't she? I knew she was there," and his eyes sought the door.

"I am going down now to tell Sylvie to get the poultices ready," said Bianchon. "They ought to go on at once."

Rastignac was left alone with the old man. He sat at the foot of the bed, and gazed at the face before him, so horribly changed that it was shocking to see.

"Noble natures cannot dwell in this world," he said; "Mme. de Beauséant has fled from it, and there he lies dying. What place indeed is there in the shallow frivolous thing called society for noble thoughts and feelings?"

Pictures of yesterday's ball rose up in his memory, in strange contrast to the deathbed before him. Bianchon suddenly appeared.

"I say, Eugène, I have just seen our head surgeon at the hospital, and I ran all the way back here. If the old man shows any signs of reason, if he begins to talk, cover

him with a mustard poultice from the neck to the base of the spine, and send round for us."

"Dear Bianchon," exclaimed Eugène.

"Oh! it is an interesting case from a scientific point of view," said the medical student, with all the enthusiasm of a neophyte.

"So!" said Eugène. "Am I really the only one who cares for the poor old man for his own sake?"

"You would not have said so if you had seen me this morning," returned Bianchon, who did not take offence at this speech. "Doctors who have seen a good deal of practice never see anything but the disease, but, my dear fellow, I can see the patient still."

He went. Eugène was left alone with the old man, and with an apprehension of a crisis that set in, in fact, before very long.

"Ah! dear boy, is that you?" said old Goriot, recognizing Eugène.

"Do you feel better?" asked Eugène, taking his hand.

"Yes. My head felt as if it were being screwed in a vise, but now it is set free again. Did you see my girls? They will be here directly; as soon as they know that I am ill they will hurry here at once; they used to take such care of me in the Rue de la Jussienne! Great Heavens! if only my room was fit for them to come into! There has been a young man here, who has burned up all my bark fuel."

"I can hear Christophe coming upstairs," Eugène answered. "He is bringing up some firewood that that young man has sent you."

"Good, but how am I to pay for the wood? I have not a penny left, dear boy. I have given everything. I am a pauper now. Well, at least the golden gown was grand, was it not? (Ah! what pain this is!) Thanks, Christophe! God will reward you, my boy; I have nothing left now."

Eugène went over to Christophe and whispered in his ear, "I will pay you well, and Sylvie too, for your trouble."

"My daughters told you that they were coming, didn't

they, Christophe? Go again to them, and I will give you five francs. Tell them that I am not feeling well, that I should like to kiss them both and see them once again before I die. Tell them that, but don't alarm them more than you can help."

Rastignac signed to Christophe to go, and the man went.

"They will come before long," the old man went on. "I know them so well. My tender-hearted Delphine! If I am going to die, she will feel it so much! And so will Nasie. I do not want to die; they will cry if I die; and if I die, dear Eugène, I shall not see them any more. It will be very dreary there where I am going. For a father it is hell to be without your children; I have served my apprenticeship already since they married. My heaven was in the Rue de la Jussienne. Eugène, do you think that if I go to heaven I could come back to earth, and be near them in spirit? I have heard some such things said. Is it true? It is as if I could see them at this moment as they used to be when we all lived in the Rue de la Jussienne. They used to come downstairs of a morning. 'Good-morning, papa!' they used to say, and I would take them on my knees; we had all sorts of little games of play together, and they had such pretty coaxing ways. We always had breakfast together, too, every morning, and they had dinner with me—in fact, I was a father then. I enjoyed my children. They did not think for themselves so long as they lived in the Rue de la Jussienne; they knew nothing of the world; they loved me with all their hearts. Mon Dieu! why could they not always be little girls? (Oh! my head! this racking pain in my head!) Ah! ah! forgive me, children; this pain is fearful; it must be agony indeed, for you have used me to endure pain. Mon Dieu! if only I held their hands in mine, I should not feel it at all.—Do you think that they are on the way? Christophe is so stupid; I ought to have gone myself. *He* will see them. But you went to the ball yesterday; just tell me how they looked. They did not know

that I was ill, did they, or they would not have been dancing, poor little things? Oh! I must not be ill any longer. They stand too much in need of me; their fortunes are in danger. And such husbands as they are bound to! I must get well! (Oh! what pain this is! what pain this is! . . . ah! ah!)—I must get well, you see; for they *must* have money, and I know how to set about making some. I will go to Odessa and manufacture starch there. I am an old hand, I will make millions. (Oh! this is agony!)”

Goriot was silent for a moment; it seemed to require his whole strength to endure the pain.

Christophe came back; and Rastignac, thinking that Goriot was asleep, allowed the man to give his story aloud.

“First of all, sir, I went to Madame la Comtesse,” he said; “but she and her husband were so busy that I couldn’t get to speak to her. When I insisted that I must see her, M. de Restaud came out to me himself, and went on like this—‘M. Goriot is dying, is he? Very well, it is the best thing he can do. I want Mme. de Restaud to transact some important business, when it is all finished she can go.’ The gentleman looked angry, I thought. I was just going away when Mme. de Restaud came out into an antechamber through a door that I did not notice, and said, ‘Christophe, tell my father that my husband wants me to discuss some matters with him, and I cannot leave the house, the life or death of my children is at stake; but as soon as it is over, I will come.’ As for Madame la Baronne, that is another story! I could not speak to her either, and I did not even see her. Her waiting-woman said, ‘Ah yes, but Madame only came back from a ball at a quarter to five this morning; she is asleep now, and if I wake her before midday she will be cross. As soon as she rings, I will go and tell her that her father is worse. It will be time enough then to tell her bad news!’ I begged and I prayed, but, there! it was no good. Then I asked for M. le Baron, but he was out.”

“To think that neither of his daughters should come!” exclaimed Rastignac. “I will write to them both.”

"Neither of them!" cried the old man, sitting upright in bed. "They are busy, they are asleep, they will not come! I knew that they would not. Not until you are dying do you know your children. . . . Oh! my friend, do not marry; do not have children! You give them life; they give you your deathblow. You bring them into the world, and they send you out of it. No, they will not come. I have known that these ten years. Sometimes I have told myself so, but I did not dare to believe it." The tears gathered and stood without overflowing the red sockets.

"Ah! if I were rich still, if I had kept my money, if I had not given all to them, they would be with me now; they would fawn on me and cover my cheeks with their kisses! I should be living in a great mansion; I should have grand apartments and servants and a fire in my room; and *they* would be about me all in tears, and their husbands and their children. I should have had all that; now—I have nothing. Money brings everything to you; even your daughters. My money. Oh! where is my money? If I had plenty of money to leave behind me, they would nurse me and tend me; I should hear their voices, I should see their faces. Ah, God! who knows? They both of them have hearts of stone. I loved them too much; it was not likely that they should love me. A father ought always to be rich; he ought to keep his children well in hand, like unruly horses. I have gone down on my knees to them. Wretches! this is the crowning act that brings the last ten years to a proper close. If you but knew how much they made of me just after they were married. (Oh! this is cruel torture!) I had just given them each eight hundred thousand francs; they were bound to be civil to me after that, and their husbands too were civil. I used to go to their houses: it was, 'My kind father' here, 'My dear father' there. There was always a place for me at their tables. I used to dine with their husbands now and then, and they were very respectful to me. I was still worth something, they thought. How should they know? I had not said anything about my affairs. It is worth while to be

civil to a man who has given his daughters eight hundred thousand francs apiece; and they showed me every attention then—but it was all for my money. Grand people are not great. I found that out by experience! I went to the theatre with them in their carriage; I might stay as long as I cared to stay at their evening parties. In fact, they acknowledged me their father; publicly they owned that they were my daughters. But I was always a shrewd one, you see, and nothing was lost upon me. Everything went straight to the mark and pierced my heart. I saw quite well that it was all sham and pretence, but there is no help for such things as these. I felt less at my ease at their dinner-table than I did downstairs here. I had nothing to say for myself. So these grand folk would ask in my son-in-law's ear, 'Who may that gentleman be?'—'The father-in-law with the dollars; he is very rich.'—'The devil, he is!' they would say, and look again at me with the respect due to my money. Well, if I was in the way sometimes, I paid dearly for my mistakes. And besides, who is perfect? (My head is one sore!) Dear Monsieur Eugène, I am suffering so now that a man might die of the pain; but it is nothing, nothing to be compared with the pain I endured when Anastasie made me feel, for the first time, that I had said something stupid.

"The next day I went to Delphine for comfort, and what should I do there but make some stupid blunder that made her angry with me. I was like one driven out of his senses. For a week I did not know what to do; I did not dare to go to see them for fear they should reproach me. And that was how they both turned me out of the house.

"O God! Thou knowest all the misery and anguish that I have endured; Thou hast counted all the wounds that have been dealt to me in these years that have aged and changed me and whitened my hair and drained my life; why dost Thou make me to suffer so to-day? Have I not more than expiated the sin of loving them too much? They themselves have been the instruments of vengeance; they have tortured me for my sin of affection.

"Ah, well! fathers know no better; I loved them so I went back to them as a gambler goes to the gaming table. This love was my vice, you see, my mistress—they were everything in the world to me. They were always wanting something or other, dresses and ornaments, and what not; their maids used to tell me what they wanted, and I used to give them the things for the sake of the welcome that they bought for me. But, at the same time, they used to give me little lectures on my behavior in society; they began about it at once. Then they began to feel ashamed of me. That is what comes of having your children well brought up. I could not go to school again at my time of life. (This pain is fearful! Mon Dieu! These doctors! these doctors! If they would open my head, it would give me some relief!) Oh, my daughters, my daughters! Anastasie! Delphine! If I could only see them! Send for the police, and make them come to me! Justice is on my side, the whole world is on my side, I have natural rights and the law with me. I protest! The country will go to ruin if a father's rights are trampled underfoot. Oh! if I could only see, and hear them, no matter what they said; if I could simply hear their voices, it would soothe the pain. Delphine! Delphine most of all. But tell them when they come not to look so coldly at me as they do. Oh! my friend, my good Monsieur Eugène, you do not know what it is when all the golden light in a glance suddenly turns to a leaden gray. It has been one long winter here since the light in their eyes shone no more for me. I have had nothing but disappointments to devour. Disappointment has been my daily bread; I have lived on humiliation and insults. I have swallowed down all the affronts for which they sold me my poor stealthy little moments of joy; for I love them so! Think of it! a father hiding himself to get a glimpse of his children! I have given all my life to them, and to-day they will not give me one hour. I am hungering and thirsting for them, my heart is burning in me, but they will not come to bring relief in the agony, for I am dying now, I feel that this is death.

Do they not know what it means to trample on a father's corpse? There is a God in heaven who avenges us fathers whether we will or no.

"Oh! they will come! Come to me, darlings, and give me one more kiss; one last kiss, the Viaticum for your father, who will pray God for you in heaven. I will tell Him that you have been good children to your father, and plead your cause with God! After all, it is not their fault. I tell you they are innocent, my friend. Tell every one that it is not their fault, and no one need be distressed on my account. It is all my own fault, I taught them to trample upon me. I loved to have it so. It is no one's affair but mine; man's justice and God's justice have nothing to do in it. God would be unjust if He condemned them for anything they may have done to me. I did not behave to them properly; I was stupid enough to resign my rights. I would have humbled myself in the dust for them. What could you expect? The most beautiful nature, the noblest soul, would have been spoiled by such indulgence. I am a wretch, I am justly punished. I, and I only, am to blame for all their sins; I spoiled them. I am guilty, and not they—but I sinned through love.

"My heart would open at the sound of their voices. I can hear them; they are coming. Yes! yes! they are coming. The law demands that they should be present at their father's death-bed; the law is on my side. It would only cost them the hire of a cab. I would pay that. Write to them, tell them that I have millions to leave to them! On my word of honor, yes. I am going to manufacture Italian paste foods at Odessa. I understand the trade. There are millions to be made in it. Nobody has thought of the scheme as yet. You see, there will be no waste, no damage in transit, as there always is with wheat and flour. Hey! hey! and starch too; there are millions to be made in the starch trade! You will not be telling a lie. Millions, tell them; and even if they really come because they covet the money, I would rather let them deceive me; and I shall see them in any case.

I want my children! I gave them life; they are mine, mine!" and he sat upright. The head thus raised, with its scanty white hair, seemed to Eugène like a threat; every line that could still speak spoke of menace.

"There, there, dear father," said Eugène, "lie down again; I will write to them at once. As soon as Bianchon comes back I will go for them, if they do not come before."

"If they do not come?" repeated the old man, sobbing. "Why, I shall be dead before then; I shall die in a fit of rage, of rage! Anger is getting the better of me. I can see my whole life at this minute. I have been cheated! They do not love me—they have never loved me all their lives! It is all clear to me. They have not come, and they will not come. The longer they put off their coming, the less they are likely to give me this joy. I know them. They have never cared to guess my disappointments, my sorrows, my wants; they never cared to know my life; they will have no presentiment of my death; they do not even know the secret of my tenderness for them. Yes, I see it all now. But their own children will avenge me. Why, for their own sakes they should come to me! Make them understand that they are laying up retribution for their own deathbeds. All crimes are summed up in this one. . . . Go to them; just tell them that if they stay away it will be parricide! There is enough laid to their charge already without adding that to the list. Cry aloud as I do now, 'Nasie! Delphine! here! Come to your father; the father who has been so kind to you is lying ill!'—Not a sound; no one comes! Then am I to die like a dog? This is to be my reward—I am forsaken at the last. They are wicked, heartless women; curses on them, I loathe them. I shall rise at night from my grave to curse them again; for, after all, my friend, have I done wrong? They are behaving very badly to me, eh? . . . What am I saying? Did you not tell me just now that Delphine was in the room? She is more tender-hearted than her sister. . . . Eugène, you are my son, you know. You will love her; be a father to her! Her sister is very un-

happy. And there are their fortunes! Ah, God! I am dying, this anguish is almost more than I can bear! Cut off my head; leave me nothing but my heart."

"Christophe!" shouted Eugène, alarmed by the way in which the old man moaned, and by his cries, "go for M. Bianchon, and send a cab here for me.—I am going to fetch them, dear father; I will bring them back to you."

"Make them come! Compel them to come! Call out the Guard, the military, anything and everything, but make them come!" He looked at Eugène, and a last gleam of intelligence shone in his eyes. "Go to the authorities, to the Public Prosecutor, let them bring them here; come they shall!"

"But you have cursed them."

"Who said that!" said the old man in dull amazement. "You know quite well that I love them, I adore them! I shall be quite well again if I can see them. . . . Go for them, my good neighbor, my dear boy, you are kind-hearted; I wish I could repay you for your kindness, but I have nothing to give you now, save the blessing of a dying man. Ah! if I could only see Delphine, to tell her to pay my debt to you. If the other cannot come, bring Delphine to me at any rate. Tell her that unless she comes you will not love her any more. She is so fond of you that she will come to me then. Give me something to drink! There is a fire in my bowels. Press something against my forehead! If my daughters would lay their hands there, I think I should get better. . . . *Mon Dieu!* who will recover their money for them when I am gone? . . . I will manufacture vermicelli out in Odessa; I will go to Odessa for their sakes."

"Here is something to drink," said Eugène, supporting the dying man on his left arm, while he held a cup of tisane to Goriot's lips.

"How you must love your own father and mother!" said the old man, and grasped the student's hand in both of his. It was a feeble, trembling grasp. "I am going to die; I shall die without seeing my daughters; do you understand? To be always thirsting, and never to drink; that has been my

life for the last ten years. . . . I have no daughters, my sons-in-law killed them. No, since their marriages they have been dead to me. Fathers should petition the Chambers to pass a law against marriage. If you love your daughters, do not let them marry. A son-in-law is a rascal who poisons a girl's mind and contaminates her whole nature. Let us have no more marriages! It robs us of our daughters; we are left alone upon our deathbeds, and they are not with us then. They ought to pass a law for dying fathers. This is awful! It cries for vengeance! They cannot come, because my sons-in-law forbid them! . . . Kill them! . . . Restaud and the Alsatian, kill them both! They have murdered me between them! . . . Death or my daughters! . . . Ah! it is too late, I am dying, and they are not here! . . . Dying without them! . . . Nasie! Fifine! Why do you not come to me? Your papa is going—"

"Dear Father Goriot, calm yourself. There, there, lie quietly and rest; don't worry yourself, don't think."

"I shall not see them. Oh! the agony of it!"

"You *shall* see them."

"Really?" cried the old man, still wandering. "Oh! shall I see them; I shall see them and hear their voices. I shall die happy. Ah! well, after all, I do not wish to live; I cannot stand this much longer; this pain that grows worse and worse. But, oh! to see them, to touch their dresses—ah! nothing but their dresses, that is very little; still, to feel something that belongs to them. Let me touch their hair with my fingers . . . their hair. . . ."

His head fell back on the pillow, as if a sudden heavy blow had struck him down, but his hands groped feebly over the quilt, as if to find his daughters' hair.

"My blessing on them . . ." he said, making an effort, "my blessing . . ."

His voice died away. Just at that moment Bianchon came into the room.

"I met Christophe," he said; "he is gone for your cab."

Then he looked at the patient, and raised the closed eye

lids with his fingers. The two students saw how dead and lustreless the eyes beneath had grown.

"He will not get over this, I am sure," said Bianchon. He felt the old man's pulse, and laid a hand over his heart.

"The machinery works still; more is the pity; in his state it would be better for him to die."

"Ah! my word, it would!"

"What is the matter with you? You are as pale as death."

"Dear fellow, the moans and cries that I have just heard. . . . There is a God! Ah! yes, yes, there is a God, and He has made a better world for us, or this world of ours would be a nightmare. I could have cried like a child; but this is too tragical, and I am sick at heart."

"We want a lot of things, you know; and where is the money to come from?"

Rastignac took out his watch.

"There, be quick and pawn it. I do not want to stop on the way to the Rue du Helder; there is not a moment to lose, I am afraid, and I must wait here till Christophe comes back. I have not a farthing; I shall have to pay the cabman when I get home again."

Rastignac rushed down the stairs, and drove off to the Rue du Helder. He reached Mme. de Restaud's house only to be told by the servant that his mistress could see no one.

"But I have brought a message from her father, who is dying," Rastignac told the man.

"The Count has given us the strictest orders, sir—"

"If it is M. de Restaud who has given the orders, tell him that his father-in-law is dying, and that I am here, and must speak with him at once."

The man went.

Eugène waited for a long while. "Perhaps her father is dying at this moment," he thought.

Then the man came back, and Eugène followed him to the little drawing-room. M. de Restaud was standing before the fireless grate, and did not ask his visitor to seat himself.

"Monsieur le Comte," said Rastignac, "M. Goriot, your father-in-law; is lying at the point of death in a squalid den in the Latin Quarter. He has not a penny to pay for fire-wood; he is expected to die at any moment, and keeps calling for his daughter—"

"I feel very little affection for M. Goriot, sir, as you probably are aware," the Count answered coolly. "His character has been compromised in connection with Mme. de Restaud; he is the author of the misfortunes that have imbittered my life and troubled my peace of mind. It is a matter of perfect indifference to me if he lives or dies. Now you know my feelings with regard to him. Public opinion may blame me, but I care nothing for public opinion. Just now I have other and much more important matters to think about than the things that fools and chatterers may say about me. As for Mme. de Restaud, she cannot leave the house; she is in no condition to do so. And, besides, I shall not allow her to leave it. Tell her father that as soon as she has done her duty by her husband and child she shall go to see him. If she has any love for her father, she can be free to go to him, if she chooses, in a few seconds; it lies entirely with her—"

"Monsieur le Comte, it is no business of mine to criticise your conduct; you can do as you please with your wife, but may I count upon your keeping your word with me? Well, then, promise me to tell her that her father has not twenty-four hours to live; that he looks in vain for her, and has cursed her already on his death-bed—that is all I ask."

"You can tell her yourself," the Count answered, impressed by the thrill of indignation in Eugène's voice.

The Count led the way to the room where his wife usually sat. She was drowned in tears, and lay crouching in the depths of an armchair, as if she were tired of life and longed to die. It was piteous to see her. Before venturing to look at Rastignac, she glanced at her husband in evident and abject terror; she seemed crushed by a tyranny both mental and physical. The Count jerked his head toward her; she construed this as a permission to speak.

"I heard all that you said, monsieur. Tell my father that if he knew all he would forgive me. . . . I did not think there was such torture in the world as this; it is more than I can endure, monsieur!—But I will not give way as long as I live," she said, turning to her husband. "I am a mother.—Tell my father that I have never sinned against him in spite of appearances!" she cried aloud in her despair.

Eugène bowed to the husband and wife; he guessed the meaning of the scene, and that this was a terrible crisis in the Countess's life. M. de Restaud's manner had told him that his errand was a fruitless one. He came away mazed and bewildered, and hurried to Mme. de Nucingen. Delphine was in bed.

"Poor dear Eugène, I am ill," she said. "I caught cold after the ball, and I am afraid of pneumonia. I am waiting for the doctor to come."

"If you were at death's door," Eugène broke in, "you must be carried somehow to your father. He is calling for you. If you could hear the faintest of those cries, you would not feel ill any longer."

"Eugène, I daresay my father is not quite so ill as you say; but I cannot bear to do anything that you do not approve, so I will do just as you wish. As for *him*, he would die of grief I know if I went out to see him and brought on a dangerous illness. Well, I will go as soon as I have seen the doctor.—Ah!" she cried out, "you are not wearing your watch, how is that?" Eugène reddened.

"Eugène, Eugène! if you have sold it already or lost it. . . . Oh! it would be very wrong of you!"

The student bent over Delphine and said in her ear, "Do you want to know? Very well, then, you shall know. Your father has nothing left to pay for the shroud that they will lay him in this evening. Your watch has been pawned, for I had nothing either."

Delphine sprang out of bed, ran to her desk, and got her purse. She gave it to Eugène, and rang the bell, crying:

"I will go, I will go at once, Eugène. Leave me, I will

dress. Why, I should be an unnatural daughter! Go back; I will be there before you.—Thérèse," she called to the waiting-woman, "ask M. de Nucingen to come upstairs at once and speak to me."

Eugène was almost happy when he reached the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Genève; he was so glad to bring the news to the dying man that one of his daughters was coming. He fumbled in Delphine's purse for money, so as to dismiss the cab at once; and discovered that the young, beautiful, and wealthy woman of fashion had only seventy francs in her private purse. He climbed the stairs and found Bianchon supporting Goriot, while the house surgeon from the hospital was applying moxas to the patient's back—under the direction of the physician, it was the last expedient of science, and it was tried in vain.

"Can you feel them?" asked the physician. But Goriot had caught sight of Rastignac, and answered, "They are coming; are they not?"

"There is hope yet," said the surgeon; "he can speak."

"Yes," said Eugène, "Delphine is coming."

"Oh! that is nothing!" said Bianchon; "he has been talking about his daughters all the time. He calls for them as a man impaled calls for water, they say—"

"We may as well give up," said the physician, addressing the surgeon. "Nothing more can be done now."

Bianchon and the house surgeon stretched the dying man out again on his loathsome bed.

"But the sheets ought to be changed," added the physician. "Even if there is no hope left, something is due to human nature. I shall come back again, Bianchon. If he complains, rub some laudanum over the diaphragm."

He went, and the house surgeon went with him.

"Come, Eugène, pluck up heart, my boy," said Bianchon, as soon as they were alone; "we must set about changing his sheets, and put him into a clean shirt. Go and tell Sylvie to bring up some sheets, and come and help us to make the bed."

Eugène went downstairs, and found Mme. Vauquer engaged in setting the table; Sylvie was helping her. Eugène had scarcely opened his mouth before the widow walked up to him with the acidulous sweet smile of a cautious shopkeeper who is anxious neither to lose money nor to offend a customer.

"My dear Monsieur Eugène," she said, when he had spoken, "you know quite as well as I do that old Goriot has not a brass farthing left. If you give out clean linen for a man who is just going to turn up his eyes, you are not likely to see your sheets again, for one is sure to be wanted to wrap him in. Now, you owe me a hundred and forty-four francs as it is, add forty francs to that for the pair of sheets, and then there are several little things, besides the candle that Sylvie will give you; altogether, it will all mount up to at least two hundred francs, which is more than a poor widow like me can afford to lose. Lord! now, Monsieur Eugène, look at it fairly. I have lost quite enough in these five days. I would rather than ten crowns that the old gentleman had moved out as you said. It sets the other lodgers against the house. In short, just put yourself in my place. I have to think of my establishment first, for I have my own living to make."

Eugène hurried up to Goriot's room.

"Bianchon," he cried, "the money or the watch?"

"There it is on the table, or the three hundred and sixty odd francs that are left of it. I paid up all the old scores out of it before they let me have the things. The pawn-ticket lies there under the money."

Rastignac hurried downstairs.

"Here, madame," he said in disgust, "let us square accounts. M. Goriot will not stay much longer in your house, nor shall I—"

"Yes, he will go out feet foremost, poor old gentleman," she said, counting the francs with a half-facetious, half-lugubrious expression.

"Let us get this over," said Rastignac.

"Sylvie, look out some sheets, and go upstairs to help the gentlemen."

"You won't forget Sylvie," said Mme. Vauquer in Eugène's ear; "she has been sitting up these two nights."

As soon as Eugène's back was turned, she hurried after her handmaid. "Take the sheets that have had the sides turned into the middle, number 7. Lord! they are plenty good enough for a corpse," she said in Sylvie's ear.

"Quick," said Bianchon, "let us change his shirt. Hold him upright."

Eugène went to the head of the bed and supported the dying man, while Bianchon drew off his shirt; and then Goriot made a movement as if he tried to clutch something to his breast, uttering a low inarticulate moaning the while, like some dumb animal in mortal pain.

"Ah yes!" cried Bianchon. "It is the little locket and the chain made of hair that he wants; we took it off awhile ago when we put the blisters on him. Poor fellow! he must have it again. There it lies on the chimney-piece."

Eugène went to the chimney-piece and found a little plait of faded golden hair—Mme. Goriot's hair, no doubt. He read the name on the little round locket, ANASTASIE on the one side, DELPHINE on the other. It was the symbol of his own heart that the father always wore on his breast. The curls of hair inside the locket were so fine and soft that it was plain they had been taken from two childish heads. When the old man felt the locket once more, his chest heaved with a long deep sigh of satisfaction, like a groan. It was something terrible to see, for it seemed as if the last quiver of the nerves were laid bare to their eyes, the last communication of sense to the mysterious point within whence our sympathies come and whither they go. A delirious joy lighted up the distorted face. The terrific and vivid force of the feeling that had survived the power of thought made such an impression on the students that the dying man felt their hot tears falling on him, and gave a shrill cry of delight. "Nasie! Fefine!"

"There is life in him yet," said Bianchon.

"What does he go on living for?" said Sylvie.

"To suffer," answered Rastignac.

Bianchon made a sign to his friend to follow his example, knelt down and passed his arms under the sick man, and Rastignac on the other side did the same, so that Sylvie, standing in readiness, might draw the sheet from beneath and replace it with the one that she had brought. Those tears, no doubt, had misled Goriot; for he gathered up all his remaining strength in a last effort, stretched out his hands, groped for the students' heads, and as his fingers caught convulsively at their hair, they heard a faint whisper:

"Ah! my angels!"

Two words, two inarticulate murmurs, shaped into words by the soul which fled forth with them as they left his lips.

"Poor dear!" cried Sylvie, melted by that exclamation; the expression of the great love raised for the last time to a sublime height by that most ghastly and involuntary of lies.

The father's last breath must have been a sigh of joy, and in that sigh his whole life was summed up; he was cheated even at the last. They laid Father Goriot upon his wretched bed with reverent hands. Thenceforward there was no expression on his face, only the painful traces of the struggle between life and death that was going on in the machine; for that kind of cerebral consciousness that distinguishes between pleasure and pain in a human being was extinguished; it was only a question of time—and the mechanism itself would be destroyed.

"He will lie like this for several hours, and die so quietly at last, that we shall not know when he goes; there will be no rattle in the throat. The brain must be completely suffused." As he spoke there was a footstep on the staircase, and a young woman hastened up, panting for breath.

"She has come too late," said Rastignac.

But it was not Delphine; it was Thérèse, her waiting-woman, who stood in the doorway.

"Monsieur Eugène," she said, "Monsieur and Madame

have had a terrible scene about some money that Madame (poor thing!) wanted for her father. She fainted, and the doctor came, and she had to be bled, calling out all the while, 'My father is dying; I want to see papa!' It was heartbreaking to hear her—"

"That will do, Thérèse. If she came now, it would be of no use. M. Goriot cannot recognize any one now."

"Poor gentleman, is he as bad as that?" said Thérèse.

"You don't want me now, I must go and look after my dinner; it is half-past four," remarked Sylvie. She all but collided with Mme. de Restaud on the landing outside.

There was something awful and appalling in the sudden apparition of the Countess. She saw the bed of death by the dim light of the single candle and her tears flowed at the sight of her father's passive features, from which the life had almost ebbed. Bianchon with thoughtful tact left the room.

"I could not escape soon enough," she said to Rastignac.

The student bowed sadly in reply. Mme. de Restaud took her father's hand and kissed it.

"Forgive me, father! You used to say that my voice would call you back from the grave; ah! come back for one moment to bless your penitent daughter. Do you hear me? Oh! this is fearful! No one on earth will ever bless me henceforth; every one hates me; no one loves me but you in all the world. My own children will hate me. Take me with you, father; I will love you, I will take care of you. He does not hear me . . . I am mad . . ."

She fell on her knees, and gazed wildly at the human wreck before her.

"My cup of misery is full," she said, turning her eyes upon Eugène. "M. de Trailles has fled, leaving enormous debts behind him, and I have found out that he was deceiving me. My husband will never forgive me, and I have left my fortune in his hands. I have lost all my illusions. Alas! I have forsaken the one heart that loved me" (she pointed to her father as she spoke), "and for whom? I have held his kindness cheap, and slighted his

affection; many and many a time I have given him pain, ungrateful wretch that I am!"

"He knew it," said Rastignac.

Just then Goriot's eyelids unclosed; it was only a muscular contraction, but the Countess's sudden start of reviving hope was no less dreadful than the dying eyes.

"Is it possible that he can hear me?" cried the Countess. "No," she answered herself, and sat down beside the bed. As Mme. de Restaud seemed to wish to sit by her father, Eugène went down to take a little food. The boarders were already assembled.

"Well," remarked the painter, as he joined them, "it seems that there is to be a death-orama upstairs."

"Charles, I think you might find something less painful to joke about," said Eugène.

"My father is dead!" shrieked the Countess.

The terrible cry brought Sylvie, Rastignac, and Bianchon; Mme. de Restaud had fainted away. When she recovered they carried her downstairs, and put her into the cab that stood waiting at the door. Eugène sent Thérèse with her, and bade the maid take the Countess to Mme. de Nucingen. Bianchon came down to them.

"Yes, he is dead," he said.

"Come, sit down to dinner, gentlemen," said Mme. Vauquer, "or the soup will be cold."

The two students sat down together.

"What is the next thing to be done?" Eugène asked of Bianchon.

"I have closed his eyes and composed his limbs," said Bianchon. "When the certificate has been officially registered at the Mayor's office, we will sew him in his winding sheet and bury him somewhere."

"He will not smell at his bread like this any more," said the painter, mimicking the old man's little trick.

"Oh, hang it all!" cried the tutor, "let old Goriot drop, and let us have something else for a change. He is a standing dish, and we have had him with every sauce this hour

or more. It is one of the privileges of the good city of Paris that anybody may be born, or live, or die there without attracting any attention whatsoever. Let us profit by the advantages of civilization. There are fifty or sixty deaths every day; if you have a mind to do it, you can sit down at any time and wail over whole hecatombs of dead in Paris. Old Goriot has gone off the hooks, has he? So much the better for him. If you venerate his memory, keep it to yourselves, and let the rest of us feed in peace."

"Oh, to be sure," said the widow, "it is all the better for him that he is dead. It looks as though he had had trouble enough, poor soul, while he was alive."

And this was all the funeral oration delivered over him who had been for Eugène the type and embodiment of Fatherhood.

The lodgers began to talk as usual. Bianchon and Eugène, having satisfied their hunger, went out to find a priest to watch that night with the dead. It was necessary to measure their last pious cares by the scanty sum of money that remained. Before nine o'clock that evening the body was laid out on the bare sacking of the bedstead in the desolate room; a lighted candle stood on either side, and the priest watched at the foot. Rastignac made inquiries of this latter as to the expenses of the funeral, and wrote to the Baron de Nucingen and the Comte de Restaud, entreating them to authorize their man of business to defray the charges of the burial.

Next day Bianchon and Rastignac were obliged to take the certificate to the registrar themselves, and by twelve o'clock the formalities were completed. Two hours went by; no word came from the Count nor from the Baron; nobody appeared to act for them, and Rastignac had already been obliged to pay the priest. Sylvie asked ten francs for sewing the old man in his winding-sheet and making him ready for the grave, and Eugène and Bianchon calculated that they had scarcely sufficient to pay for the funeral, if nothing was forthcoming from the dead man's family. So it was the medical student who laid him in a pauper's coffin.

"Let us play those wretches a trick," said he. "Go to the cemetery, buy a grave for five years at Père-Lachaise, and arrange with the Church and the undertaker to have a third-class funeral. If the daughters and their husbands decline to repay you, you can carve this on the headstone—'Here lies M. Goriot, father of the Comtesse de Restaud and the Baronne de Nucingen, interred at the expense of two students.'"

Eugène took part of his friend's advice, but only after he had gone in person first to M. and Mme. de Nucingen, and then to M. and Mme. de Restaud—a fruitless errand. He went no further than the doorstep in either house. The servants had received strict orders to admit no one.

"Monsieur and Madame can see no visitors. They have just lost their father, and are in deep grief over their loss."

Eugène's Parisian experience told him that it was idle to press the point. Something clutched strangely at his heart when he saw that it was impossible to reach Delphine.

"Sell some of your ornaments," he wrote hastily in the porter's room, "so that your father may be decently laid in his last resting-place."

He sealed the note, and begged the porter to give it to Thérèse for her mistress; but the man took it to the Baron de Nucingen, who flung the note into the fire. Eugène, having finished his errands, returned to the lodging-house about three o'clock. In spite of himself, the tears came into his eyes. The coffin, in its scanty covering of black cloth, was standing there on the pavement before the gate, on two chairs. It was a pauper who lay there; no one made a pretence of mourning for him; he had neither friends nor kindred—there was no one to follow him to the grave.

Bianchon's duties compelled him to be at the hospital, but he had left a few lines for Eugène, telling his friend about the arrangements he had made for the burial service. The house student's note told Rastignac that a mass was beyond their means, that the ordinary office for the dead was cheaper,

and must suffice, and that he had sent word to the undertaker by Christophe. Eugène had scarcely finished reading Bianchon's scrawl, when he looked up and saw the little circular gold locket that contained the hair of Goriot's two daughters in Mme. Vauquer's hands.

"How dared you take it?" he asked.

"Good Lord! is that to be buried along with him?" retorted Sylvie. "It is gold."

"Of course it shall!" Eugène answered indignantly; "he shall at any rate take one thing that may represent his daughters into the grave with him."

When the hearse came, Eugène had the coffin carried into the house again, unscrewed the lid, and reverently laid on the old man's breast the token that recalled the days when Delphine and Anastasie were innocent little maidens.

Rastignac and Christophe and the undertaker's two men were the only followers of the funeral. The Church of Saint-Etienne du Mont was only a little distance from the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève. When the coffin had been deposited in a low, dark, little chapel, the law student looked round in vain for Goriot's two daughters or their husbands. Christophe was his only fellow-mourner; Christophe, who appeared to think it was his duty to attend the funeral of the man who had put him in the way of such handsome tips. As they waited there in the chapel for the two priests, the chorister, and the beadle, Rastignac grasped Christophe's hand. He could not utter a word just then.

"Yes, Monsieur Eugène," said Christophe, "he was a good and worthy man, who never said one word louder than another; he never did any one any harm, and gave nobody any trouble."

The two priests, the chorister, and the beadle came, and said and did as much as could be expected for seventy francs in an age when religion cannot afford to say prayers for nothing.

The ecclesiastics chanted a psalm, the "Libera nos" and the "De profundis." The whole service lasted about twenty

minutes. There was but one mourning coach, which the priest and chorister agreed to share with Eugène and Christophe.

"There is no one else to follow us," remarked the priest, "so we may as well go quickly, and so save time; it is half-past five."

But just as the coffin was put in the hearse, two empty carriages, with the armorial bearings of the Comte de Restaud and the Baron de Nucingen, arrived and followed in the procession to Père-Lachaise. At six o'clock Goriot's coffin was lowered into the grave, his daughters' servants standing round the while. The ecclesiastic recited the short prayer that the students could afford to pay for, and then both priest and lackeys disappeared at once. The two gravediggers flung in several spadefuls of earth, and then stopped and asked Rastignac for their fee. Eugène felt in vain in his pocket, and was obliged to borrow five francs of Christophe. This thing, so trifling in itself, gave Rastignac a terrible pang of distress. It was growing dusk, the damp twilight fretted his nerves; he gazed down into the grave, and the tears he shed were drawn from him by the sacred emotion, a single-hearted sorrow. When such tears fall on earth, their radiance reaches heaven. And with that tear that fell on old Goriot's grave, Eugène Rastignac's youth ended. He folded his arms and gazed at the clouded sky; and Christophe, after a glance at him, turned and went—Rastignac was left alone.

He went a few paces further, to the highest point of the cemetery, and looked out over Paris and the windings of the Seine; the lamps were beginning to shine on either side of the river. His eyes turned almost eagerly to the space between the column of the Place Vendôme and the cupola of the Invalides; there lay the shining world that he had wished to reach. He glanced over that humming hive, seeming to draw a foretaste of its honey, and said magniloquently:

"Henceforth there is war between us."

And by way of throwing down the glove to Society, Rastignac went to dine with Mme. de Nucingen.



UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 162 737 1

